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The Quaker way:

Ethical labor and humanitarian relief

A B S T R A C T

In this article, I consider the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) relief project in Gaza (1948–50) to explore ethical dilemmas that are endemic to humanitarianism. Considering humanitarian practice from this distinctive perspective can shed new light on this arena. Exploration of the "ethical labor" of Quaker practice in Gaza illuminates an ethical practice that joined concern for others with care of the self, a practice that was equally attentive to an obligation to be "in the world" and to be true to oneself. The debates and practices of AFSC volunteers in Gaza reveal humanitarianism as a field of compromised action. [*humanitarianism, ethics, refugees, Quakers, Palestine*]

In my opinion the success, which our group had in moving into a totally unfamiliar situation, in operating in a part of the world which does not act in the fashion to which we are accustomed, and in handling a mass distribution program with the questionable cooperation of a military government had been miraculous.

We found that contrary to our early high hopes for achieving "friendly services," very little was possible within the framework with which we had to operate. . . . As we tried to become more and more efficient in our distribution methods and more accurate in our list of refugees, we detached ourselves personally more and more from intimate individual contacts with the very refugees we were trying to help. If Friends wished primarily to be concerned with people as such, then we moved away from this concern in our work.

These two evaluations of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) relief project in Gaza were not, as one might imagine, written by two different members of the team with contrary evaluations of the project.[1] Rather, both these statements come from a single report penned shortly after its conclusion.[2] This mix of angst and self-reproach with a considerable degree of pride was characteristic of the Quaker experience of this project. In this article, I explore both the particular challenges of Quaker relief in Gaza and the broader dilemmas of postwar humanitarianism that this project illuminates. Commissioned by the United Nations in 1948 to provide aid to Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip—the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) were given responsibility for refugees in other places—AFSC practice was constrained both by the UN mandate and by the conditions they encountered on the ground. Quakers were committed to pacifism yet had to work closely with the military. They wanted to provide assistance to anyone in need yet were compelled to limit their reach. Perhaps most fundamentally, they wanted to be more than humanitarian—to be Quaker, to be engaged in a project that would help advance the cause

of peace and justice—yet often found themselves acting as "a relief agency and nothing more."[3]

When Quakers struggled with the ethical dilemmas of their work, they understood these questions to be particularly Quaker, and to a certain extent they were. At the same time, though, they shed tremendous light on problems that have come to be recognized as endemic to humanitarian relief in almost any circumstance. These margins of humanitarianism have proven to be quite central to its practice. Questions about whether relief work might actually prolong suffering (Terry 2002), whether neutrality is an ethical position (Rieff 2002), how relief projects represent and shape refugees (Malkki 1996), and what is the proper domain of action (Kennedy 2004) always accompany this work. The AFSC project shows people grappling with these problems before they were familiar. It also highlights another important feature of the humanitarian dilemma: its impact on and consequences for relief providers.

The debates among volunteers that were a consistent feature of the project illuminate an ethical practice that joined concern for others with "care of the self" (Foucault 1997), a practice that was equally attentive to an obligation to be "in the world" and to be true to oneself. The difficulty in meeting both these obligations often filled Quakers with anguish. It was here where they identified their biggest failings. This challenge also illuminates yet another central aspect of humanitarian practice: its necessarily compromised position. Greater consideration of the practices of caring for the self that are part of any humanitarian endeavor is necessary for understanding this field. Examination of the Quaker project in Gaza affords an opportunity to explore how humanitarian practitioners navigate this difficult terrain, how they decide to keep doing the work even when it challenges their core principles, and what the consequences of such decisions may be.

The AFSC began providing relief to Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip even before the formal demarcation of this territory. The Gaza Strip, a 28-mile sliver of land that is now home to about 1.5 million people, is a product of the 1948 war over the establishment of Israel, in the course of which the majority of the native Palestinians were forced from their homes and have never been permitted to return. Its boundaries are those of the armistice agreement that ended active fighting between the new state of Israel and, in this case, Egypt. This agreement also recognized Egypt as the administrator of this territory, a status that ended with the 1967 occupation of Gaza by Israel. During the British Mandate (1917–48), the area that became the Gaza Strip had a population of 80,000; in 1948, it received around 250,000 refugees.

Given these numbers and the limited resources of the area, it is not surprising that the influx of refugees created an immediate humanitarian emergency. As noted above, the Quaker relief project in Gaza was one component of the first UN response to the massive Palestinian displacement (around 750,000 people in all) in the course of the 1948 war. Both the enormity of the need and the political volatility of the area distinguished the Gazan situation from projects the AFSC had undertaken elsewhere. The AFSC thought seriously about the implications, both for the organization's reputation and for its mission to advance a peace agenda, of accepting the UN request. In deciding to take on the project—with a set of conditions it called the "19 points"—it was noted that:

> we take the risk of failure which will be a public failure, and even if we have some success we shall certainly not satisfy everyone. . . . We shall be in the world limelight, and we will have to face some compromises away from our traditional ways of working. On the other hand, refusal would be grave decision. Success in Palestine is a vital necessity for the future of U.N. The opportunity to demonstrate the power of the non-violent approach is enormous. The political people have turned to us because they believe we have something more to offer than merely a politically neutral position.[4]

Although the Quakers saw their interest in being more than humanitarian as part of the reason they were asked to take on this task, the conditions of the project made it difficult to enact this Quaker extra (neither is it clear that the United Nations was really seeking that out).

The AFSC consistently resisted defining itself as humanitarian, even as it repeatedly found itself being so. Quakers understood humanitarianism to denote the work of "mere" relief provision, but they saw their own purpose as broader: to advance a peace agenda, and to encourage resolution of the conditions producing conflict. As an AFSC founder described the organization's work: "This international service is not mere humanitarianism; it is not merely mopping up, cleaning up the world after a war. It is a means of rehabilitation and is aimed at helping the spirit and giving hope that there can be a peaceful world" (Abrams 1991).

Even as they had anticipated facing tremendous challenges in Gaza, the volunteers in the Quaker Palestine Unit (QPU) found the project to be even more fraught than they had imagined. They also found the need to be, if anything, even greater than they had anticipated. When Quakers first arrived they were shocked by what they saw. As one report put it: "The condition of living of the large number of refugees are appalling, and can hardly be described."[5] Another indicated: "Every house is crowded with refugees, but many are still forced to live under open air. Tents have not yet been given out in the surroundings of Gaza."[6] They moved quickly to begin organizing ration delivery of food, clothing, and blankets. Such aid was always the center of the project, but they also provided medical care and schooling and developed more "works" oriented projects such as carpentry shops and weaving enterprises (see Figure 1).
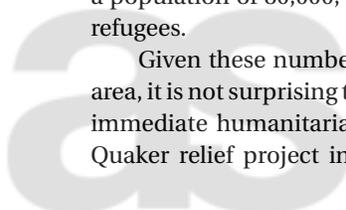
Figure 1. Checking supplies. AFSC Archives.

The AFSC project in Gaza, which lasted from late 1948 until mid-1950, provides a window into humanitarianism from what might seem to be its margins: a small organization (the Gaza project really strained its resources), uncomfortable with the humanitarian label, operating in a time of great uncertainty about the direction of humanitarian action. In 1948, what it meant to be humanitarian was not a fully settled matter (nor is it now). This was a formative period in the development of the post–WWII humanitarian regime, a regime that includes both legal mechanisms for the protection of refugees and a proliferation of relief organizations. When the Quakers were in Gaza, many of the most important features of postwar humanitarianism were still under discussion: the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was established in 1950 and the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was enacted in 1951.[7]

Humanitarian organizations existed—the ICRC for instance was established in 1863—but not in anything like current numbers or with current standards of professionalization. And what a "global community" with obligations to its weakest members—which was supposed to be embodied in the United Nations—might come to look like remained profoundly unclear.[8] Looking back at this moment illuminates debates and challenges that have been central to humanitarianism in the years since.

In what follows, I explore these tensions and dilemmas, relying both on the archival records of the AFSC Palestine project and on a series of oral histories conducted by the AFSC in the early 1990s with former QPU volunteers. Not only is this article part of an emerging anthropology of humanitarianism, it is a work of historical anthropology, pursuing an "ethnography in the archives" (Stoler 2002) to illuminate the contours of Quaker practice. In so doing, it contributes to anthropological explorations of humanitarianism not only by adding distinctive agency into the mix but also by situating considerations of contemporary humanitarianism within a longer history, a history that is vital for understanding its present. Understanding the current challenges of humanitarianism—what some have called a crisis (Rieff 2002)—requires an understanding of developments over time, not simply in policy and legal frameworks but also of the personal experiences and on-the-ground challenges humanitarian actors have confronted as they have pursued their work.

The AFSC archives are especially rich in their detail. Not only do these materials provide a window into Quaker ethics, their very compilation is the result of an ethical practice that demanded persistent self-contemplation. The oral histories gave people the opportunity to reflect, at a distance from the pressures of the work, on the significance of this project in their lives and to their sense of Quaker selfhood. Archival documents illuminate in-the-moment debates about both technical and ethical aspects of the project. Each of the plethora of committees established by the QPU—

one incoming field director was described as being "staggered by the list of committees"—recorded detailed minutes of their meetings, in which difficult subjects were often raised. The culture of debate among the Quakers was heated enough that, when a public relations proposal suggested convening meetings open to refugees, some people worried that "the way we argue among ourselves might give a bad impression."[9] However much Quakers may have fretted about their own lack of consensus, these rich materials provide an opportunity to explore the ethical labor of AFSC volunteers.

In elucidating and exploring the "ethical field" (Faubion 2001) of Quaker practice in Gaza, then, in this article I examine issues of concern to both the AFSC's specific style of intervention and humanitarianism more generally. I consider both what was distinctive about the Quaker approach and what their work shared with other humanitarian organizations that have followed. The AFSC's Gaza project illuminates ethics in action both as a practice of work on the self and as a deeply relational endeavor. Quakers found themselves, and their evaluations of their own practice, to be in part dependent on the ethical labor of the refugees they were there to help. Even as interpersonal relations were at the heart of the Quaker approach to both ethics and relief work, these relations produced some discomfort and necessitated compromise in ethics and in humanitarian practice.

The ethical field: Being Quaker in Gaza

The AFSC project in Gaza had important consequences, both for the largely Quaker volunteers who staffed it and for the population of the area. Quaker relief work for Palestinians helped lay the foundation for the more than half a century of refugee services that have followed. The project ended with the establishment of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which utilized much of the knowledge, methods, and even staff of the AFSC project. I have explored the consequences of this relief for Gazans in detail elsewhere (Feldman 2007), and here turn to the dilemmas that it posed for the Quakers. The common thread in all these dilemmas was their concern about whether the conduct of the project was enabling volunteers to be truly Quaker, to be true to the persons they wanted to become. Although volunteers understood the challenge of being Quaker as a lifelong project, my focus here is really on this context, on what it meant it to be Quaker in Gaza and on how their commitments translated to these circumstances (see Figure 2).

The AFSC has approached relief work as a means to enact their ethics, but just as frequently these projects have produced (or at least illuminated) seemingly intractable contradictions among these principles. The conceptual field of Quaker ethics includes both a set of values and an array of techniques for enacting these values.[10] Among Quakerism's

Figure 2. Nurses paint their office. AFSC Archives.

central values are dedication to pacifism—and to working for peace—and belief in the human capacity for goodness. Quakers believe this capacity can be brought out through person-to-person interaction and they place great value on individual relations in all aspects of their work. Quaker ethics are concerned with both method and mission. They stress both the ethics of interaction (with a focus on personal relations between the givers and recipients of aid) and the ethics of outcome. It is not only the "improvement" of others that is at stake in the Quaker way but also work on themselves. Perpetual self-reflection and critique are deemed vital to their practice and to the accomplishment of their ideals. In Gaza, Quakers felt immediate tension between their pacifism and the need to work closely with Egyptian military forces. They quickly encountered even more difficult conflicts between the restricted humanitarian mandate from the United Nations and their broader peace agenda. The demands of the work itself—of efficient and effective aid distribution—frequently produced difficult dilemmas. AFSC volunteers often found themselves having to choose among ethical principles, a circumstance that made them profoundly uncomfortable.

Quakers in Gaza approached their work as a form of what I call "ethical labor," and judged themselves and their project in these terms. The idea of ethical labor had at least two senses. They understood the project itself, in terms of both technique and principle, to be a form of ethical work. That is, doing the work technically well had ethical value, as did the relation of that work to Quaker values like peace and justice.[11] At the same time, the idea of ethical labor applies just as directly to the work on themselves that had to accompany their work for refugees. This care of the self was not simply an internal practice—a work of self-reflection and correction—but was also about ways of interacting with other people. Foucault argued that for ancient Greeks "the problem of relationships with others is present throughout the development of the care of the self" (1997:287).[12] This observation applies to Quakers as well, though, as volunteers in the field quickly discovered, what the proper ethical relationship between Quakers and refugees should be was often unclear. As concerned as Quakers were about the effects of their decisions and actions on the refugee population they were aiding, their most intractable dilemmas were about the implications for themselves. It was in this regard

that they judged themselves most harshly. Ultimately, most volunteers in Gaza seemed to feel that they did a pretty decent job of providing refugees with what they needed; they were much less sure about whether they had been able to be Quakerly as they did so. Even as volunteers in Gaza understood this dilemma in specifically Quaker terms, concerns about the effects of humanitarian practice on both providers and recipients have come to characterize the field more generally (Redfield 2006).

Traditions of ethical intervention

In each of its guises—and modern humanitarianism has roots in both colonialism and abolitionism (Haskell 1992; Lester 2002) in both the laws of war and traditions of charity (Forsythe 2005; Hutchinson 1996)—humanitarian activity has been framed by a discourse about the ethics of intervention.[13] Humanitarianism represents a claim that to do something (however limited that something might be) is better than doing nothing in the face of war, suffering, and human misery (Pandolfi 2003; Walker 1997). Questions about whether this judgment is correct are one source of the ethical dilemmas in humanitarian work (Bradel 2004; Fassin and d'Halluin 2005; Terry 2002). Questions about the character and form of such intervention are another source of humanitarian dilemmas, and these debates have produced some of the most significant shifts within the movement. The capacity to do something is often dependent on entering into cooperation with governments and other actors that may be responsible for producing the need for humanitarianism in the first place. It further requires working within a context of both international humanitarian law (Hyndman 2000) and international humanitarian sensibilities that shape sympathy for the suffering and claims about obligations to intervene (Boltanski 1999; Laqueur 1989; Sontag 2003). The competing demands of each of these domains have contributed to the challenges of humanitarian work.

The Quaker movement does not have a neat place in the humanitarian arena, in part because Quakers have been uncomfortable defining their engagements in the world as "simply" humanitarian. Even with its self-conscious distinctions, though, AFSC practice illuminates many of the central challenges of humanitarianism. It certainly shares with other organizations the commitment to do something in the face of human tragedy. The religious affiliation of the AFSC also joins it to, rather than distinguishing it from, other humanitarian groups. Indeed, humanitarian action has often operated along the cusp of religious and secular practice.[14] Not only does modern humanitarianism have antecedents in religious movements and sensibilities but also organizations that we now think of as primarily secular frequently have strong religious ties. The ICRC, for instance, was "derived from Christian charity" even as it "tried to downplay, for the best of reasons, its religious origins" (Forsythe 2005:27).

Near East Relief, an organization founded around the same time as the AFSC, began as a specifically Protestant effort to save Christian Armenians from Muslim Turks, later to redefine itself as a secular organization that "still felt that it was doing 'missionary work,' (but) that work was now explicitly cultural, not religious" (Tejirian 2000). This tension between religious and secular orientations toward action in the world is a continuing feature of humanitarianism (Taithe 2004).

The AFSC approach to humanitarianism was clearly embedded in the tenets of the Quaker movement, as well as in a long history of Quaker action. Believing in "man's inherent capacity to express and respond to goodness" (Byrd 1960:4), Quakerism is guided by an "interest in the condition of all men . . . (which) motivated Friends towards the efforts at social, political, and economic reform for which they are perhaps best known by the world at large" (Byrd 1960:17). Among the most well-known efforts was their involvement in abolitionist movements in both the United States and Great Britain.[15] Even before the founding of the AFSC—and its initial British counterpart, the English Friends War Victims Relief Committee (Frost 1992)—Quakers had a history of involvement in relief provision in places such as Ireland and Russia (McFadden 1997). Although this work was motivated by religious belief, Quaker relief projects have generally taken nonsectarian and nonproselytizing approaches. According to a study of their aid in response to an 1847 famine in Ireland, they also quickly recognized that "famine was not an event" that could be solved through charity but, rather, that "until there were fundamental structural changes, famine would go on devouring the resources poured into it and never be satiated" (Hatton 1993:7). This recognition that relief had to be tied to broader political and social policies continued to be a concern for projects developed under the auspices of the AFSC.

The AFSC was founded during WWI to provide conscientious objectors with an alternate means of providing national service. Among its first projects was to provide relief to displaced persons in France.[16] Just as relief work in Ireland had been accompanied by a belief in the need to challenge poverty-producing conditions, relief work in war-torn Europe was seen as part of a broader project of "witnessing for peace" (Frost 1992:2). To secure permission to work in the war zone, though, AFSC volunteers had to agree not to discuss their beliefs. Their witnessing was thus largely silent, with Quakers left hoping that "our deeds carry the message" (Frost 1992:3). Whether they did was uncertain, as Jack Frost notes, "although the AFSC members insisted to themselves that they were conducting a 'silent' pacifist vigil, to outsiders they were humanitarians helping to bind up the wounds of war" (1992:14).[17] The AFSC never understood its purpose as only humanitarian—although it certainly was that as well. As Farah Mendlesohn comments about Quaker attitudes toward their relief during the Spanish Civil War: "They were there, they believed, to witness to peace and to the works of

peace. If their efforts fed only people's bodies, while essential it was not enough" (1999:4). This tension in their work was never fully resolved.

In 1947, the AFSC, along with the British Friends Service Council, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In Gunnar Jahn's presentation of the prize, the chair of the Nobel Committee noted that Quaker relief work was characterized by "silent help from the nameless to the nameless which is their contribution to the promotion of brotherhood among nations." He further went on to say that Quakers proved the importance of "significant expression of sympathy between men, without regard to nationality or race; feelings which, when carried into deeds, must provide the foundation of a lasting peace."[18] Even as the AFSC saw the award as a highpoint for the organization, public perception of the meaning of their practice indicated some of the pitfalls of a silent witness. Irwin Abrams quotes an Oslo newspaper as saying "the Quaker religion consists of relief work" (1991), a comment that must have caused some chagrin among Quakers committed to a peace mission. Certainly the prize did not eliminate the difficulties in reconciling a principled commitment to an expansive sense of mission with the challenges of relief practice (Ingle 1998). The Gaza project was the first major operation the AFSC undertook after winning the Nobel Prize, and it served to confirm these difficulties.

Although Quaker volunteers in Gaza were troubled by many aspects of their work, they do not seem to have been concerned about whether they were articulating a religious message to the refugees in Gaza. Although Quakerism as a movement has been marked by differences between its evangelizing and liberal branches, those staffing the Gaza project do not seem to have had any interest in the former. In fact, Quakers in the field sometimes expressed concerns about the active proselytizing of other Christian workers in the area, worrying that an aggressive Christian presence would undermine their ability to work effectively.[19] They also worked on Sunday, and took Friday as their day of rest, a practice that led a visiting missionary to wonder whether they were "fail(ing) to function as Christians in their day-to-day operations."[20] In so far as volunteers in the QPU (or "kewpies" as they sometimes called themselves)[21] felt a tension between their Quakerism and their relief work (and they clearly did), it was not about their ability to make Gazans Christian but, rather, about the extent to which they themselves were working in accordance with Quaker principles.[22]

Pacifists in a military zone

Given the centrality of pacifism to Quakerism, the close cooperation with the Egyptian military that was required by the work in Gaza created discomfort for volunteers in the field. Part of this discomfort was because of matters of principle, but just as much was attributable to a disconnect between military culture and Quaker attitudes. Oral histories

record Quaker feelings about the military. Alwin Holtz remembered arriving in Gaza and finding an Egyptian machine gun post in the backyard of the house the QPU was renting: "Of course, good pacifist that I am, I got furious immediately."[23] In his oral history David Walker expressed what seemed to be a common Quaker disdain for the military: "I experienced a whole lot of unpleasantness from the Egyptian Army. They thought we were stupid. . . . They tried to emphasize their own importance, but that, again, is typical of any army. My prejudice was just that they were stupid, and they were stupid."[24] Despite these clashes of attitude, there was no question about whether the AFSC would work with the army: it was an absolute necessity, just as it had been during the provision of relief in WWI. The recognition of this necessity by all the Quakers in Gaza underscores the ethical value attached to technical operations. The challenges that were a persistent part of the Quaker–army relationship further illuminate the tension between method and mission within this ethical field.

For the most part, Quakers reported cooperation from officials about matters of policy and procedure. A more conflicted relationship emerged on the ground where the lieutenants assigned to the refugee camps—"each recently recruited from Egypt and sometimes unused to the crises of refugee camp life"[25]—frequently got in the way of Quaker work. In one instance, in which a lieutenant interfered in food distribution, threatening to arrest the Palestinian assistant, Al Holtz remembered responding that "this was not going to go on here, the military was not taking over a pacifist organization, not in my lifetime!"[26] Recognizing the need for effective cooperation, the Quakers held a series of meetings with military representatives. These meetings focused on questions of technical management; reducing conflict in these areas would also serve to minimize flare-ups of "principled" disagreements. At the first meeting, formal agreement was reached on the basic division of labor. Maintaining the practice that had already been established, the Quakers would have sole responsibility for the feeding operation—including receipt and distribution of food, hiring and firing of staff, determining eligibility, and handling complaints. The Egyptians—both the military directly and the newly established Refugee Department—were responsible for "the security of the people in each center."[27] Although these meetings were productive, they did not entirely resolve conflict between the two groups, as is made clear by repeated mention of difficulties in the archival record.[28]

One Quaker official, seeking to understand the causes of the tensions, was reflective about the awkward position in which the Quaker presence put the Egyptian army. He noted that Egypt's history under British colonialism, as well as the recent defeat of the army, made military officers particularly sensitive: "Regardless of how much we as individuals may repudiate the concept of empire, the colour of our skin, our language and our technical facility all serve to identify us in

the eyes of the middle level Egyptians with British Empire tradition." He further commented that "it would also be natural for them to resent the implication that they were too incompetent to handle supply distribution, while we on the other hand, 'a happy band of amateurs,' were designated internationally as competent."[29] As these comments acknowledge, humanitarianism can never entirely form a space apart. It always enters into a field that is replete with political relations and histories and is not fully separable from them.

In this case, many Quakers admired the methods that the army had used to manage distribution, such as maintaining village groupings and appointing a local leader *(mukhtar)* to act as liaison, and they made use of many of them. As one report argued, "I also feel that there is considerable virtue in the systems which they have adopted, and that these systems are well suited to the peculiar nature of the people, presenting 'moda operandi' which might not occur to a Westerner."[30] Further, as Lee Dinsmore recalled in an oral history, the AFSC depended on the military to do its job: "Without the Egyptian administering a place there and justice and everything else, police supervision, it would be something we couldn't do. Whether it was an uncomfortable thing, being part of the military in effect, having the military make it possible for us to do thing, I think there may have been some."[31] Although it was their pacifist beliefs that led to Quaker unease in this case, discomfort with the kinds of cooperation required for relief work has been a general feature of humanitarian operations (Flipse 2002). Very often the only way to deliver aid to people in need is to work with forces that may be responsible for producing the need itself, a condition that is one of the fundamental paradoxes of humanitarianism (Terry 2002). To be a humanitarian worker, then, is always to make compromises on certain principles, and it is only this compromise that makes the work possible.

Defining the Quaker mission in Gaza

The extent to which concerns about working with the military intersected with people's broader anxieties about being truly Quaker in their work were made abundantly clear in the discussions of the internal Military-Police Committee, which was charged with defining the team's proper policy about dealings with the Egyptian army.[32] Despite multiple meetings, the committee was not able to reach a consensus on such a policy; it did, however, discover agreement about a number of underlying principles. There was widespread commitment among the team to the idea that "the Peace Testimony of the Friends is—or should be—the basis of our policy and behavior as a group and as individuals." It was also agreed that "our team has a big responsibility not only in front of the refugees for doing an honest, straight, and unselfish job, but also towards the United Nations. A possible success of this kind of international help may eventually strengthen the ideas of international solidarity, better mu-

tual understanding and may become a more used means in achieving peace."[33]

Clearly, the principles that guided the Quaker presence in Gaza mandated more than providing aid to people in need, although they certainly had that aim as well. This broader commitment distinguishes the AFSC Gaza project from other humanitarian interventions in the postwar period, even as in practice the project was quite similar to this broader movement. Humanitarianism generally seeks only to maintain "life in crisis" (Redfield 2005) and not to address the structural and political conditions that may have produced such crisis. Although the AFSC explicitly rejected such a limited conception of its mission, it was not always (or often) successful at incorporating its larger commitments into its work. Even in this inchoate stage, humanitarian practice was driven by pressures of efficiency and concerns about management that produced justice and relief, and human rights and humanitarianism, as separate regimes of action.

When people volunteered to come to Gaza, they hoped to contribute in some way to the broader Quaker peace mission and to efforts to find a resolution to the Palestine refugee problem. Al Holtz reflected on his position: "We came for an emergency feeding program with the notion that we would help with the resettlement, which was what we were all interested in, and I was particularly interested in it."[34] The Quaker relation to this political domain was an uncomfortable one. They were clearly neither responsible for nor authorized to produce a political resolution, but neither were they willing to provide relief indefinitely in its absence. The Quaker insistence on the importance of finding a resolution to the refugee problem did not indicate a commitment to any particular solution.[35] Whereas Palestinian refugees saw only their return to their homes as a real solution, AFSC members were willing to contemplate settlement elsewhere. This difference reflects the distinction they made between the ethical and the political. Whereas some humanitarian organizations have argued that a commitment to a broader sense of mission requires becoming political, I understand the Quakers to have been making a different claim. When they said they had "something more to offer than merely a politically neutral position,"[36] what I take them to have referred to was their ethical commitment. In their view, to have a mission that extended beyond caring for life in crisis did not mean to be political but, in fact, to be ethical.[37] To demand that a solution be found (an ethical position in Quaker eyes), that is, but not to advocate any particular resolution.

This position complicated their relations with Palestinian refugees. AFSC volunteers often developed close relations with refugees—and felt a responsibility to convey their opinions to the outside world—but drew a line at discussing politics with them.[38] Members of the Gaza unit insisted that, "since it is very difficult for refugees here to communicate with the outside world, we feel we have an obligation to convey what we can of their opinions and thinking at the

present time."[39] At the same time, it was not deemed appropriate even to repeat to refugees what they were saying to the United Nations and the world at large. In fact, when an Arabic-language bulletin published for distribution among refugees included statements about the importance of finding a permanent solution, the team decided that such matters should never be discussed again "in view of the strictly non-political position we hold in this area."[40] Rather than silencing refugees, as humanitarian organizations have often been accused of doing (Malkki 1996), Quakers imposed a kind of silence on themselves—at least in the context of their interactions with refugees.

Throughout their time in Gaza the Quakers did seek to remind the United Nations of its responsibility to find a solution for the refugee problem, and they were consistently frustrated by the lack of progress. Each time the AFSC reluctantly agreed to extend its project in Gaza, which happened several times before UNRWA took over, the organization asked for "assurance in concrete terms that those in power had taken specific steps and were urgently pursuing the search for an ultimate solution."[41] It was in part the utter failure of the United Nations to achieve anything in this regard that led the AFSC to refuse further involvement in Gaza. As one member of the team reflected about the project's conclusion: "Perhaps, if the UN had been strong enough to implement its political recommendations, we would have before us another year of Quaker work in Palestine."[42]

AFSC volunteers were acutely aware of the danger that their own work might—precisely by keeping people alive and reasonably healthy—facilitate delays in a resolution of the refugee problem. For their project to be ethical, it had to do more than feed people. In this view of their mission, they judged themselves fairly harshly. In a discussion in July 1949 about whether the project should be extended beyond December of that year this issue was hotly debated and recorded in great detail. I quote from the relevant parts of the transcript at some length (and identify speakers by first name, as does the transcript). Vern summed up his feelings: "I think we must say this has not been a Quaker unit, but a relief agency and nothing more. If we are to go on, we must decide: Are we to continue just as we are? Then there is no point why we should stay. Others can do it." Dorothy interjected that there were people "who have tried to do things beside relief." But David agreed with Vern that "we are not doing a Quaker job." Ralph, though, offered a strong defense of the mission:

> All of us have tried to do an honest job and have made efforts. I wonder what we mean when we say we have failed in this and that extra. Is not the way we are doing our job the extra, the expression of what we mean? I would rather we listen to our own conscience than listen to people who have not understood what we mean. . . . It sounds a little funny in the ears of people who are not

Quakers to stress that we have not done a Quaker job. . . . I believe we have done fairly well in efforts at least. If we try to increase the spirit of sacrifice and service, we should finally achieve what we are trying to do.

Marshall echoed this sentiment, saying: "I should like to point out that the basis for our work is an acceptance of our part of the sins of world. It becomes then a work which is a concern for individuals." Alan agreed as well: "I think you are selling yourselves short. When I came, it was a great shock to find people here treating people of this area as individuals, in contrast to the way they are treated by other peoples. . . . The Quakers are a symbol of honesty here."[43]

These contrasting evaluations of Quaker work in Gaza illuminate both how volunteers understood their purpose and how much attention they paid to reflecting on this purpose. The ethical labor of being Quaker in Gaza was not only in the work with refugees but also in this kind of considered judgment of themselves. There was broad consensus that if the project was only about relief than it was a failure in terms of being Quaker, although one doctor working with the group did insist that "there is undue minimizing of what we are doing in keeping people alive." Where people disagreed was what would count as the Quaker "extra." Did this extra lie in the nature of projects undertaken? Or was it to be found in their persons, in how they understood themselves as actors in the world? Or, still again, did it come from the style of interaction with the refugees? Each of these seems to have been important to members of the team, but it was the last that was the greatest source of anxiety. The disconnect between how the Quakers felt like they should interact with people and how they felt compelled to because of the demands of the work was tremendously troubling.

AFSC members also recognized, though, that it was not only outside pressures that stood in the way of accomplishing this broader agenda, but also their own shortcomings. As the Military-Police Committee suggested in self-reproach, "the team had not been willing to make the sacrifices of discipline and inconvenience—and possibly even of the work—involved in being true to the essential principle of pacifism and Quakerism."[44] The idea that there might be sacrifice "even of the work," a statement that was not further explained in the document, indicates the tremendous importance that being truly Quaker, even as they did their relief work, had for people. In many ways it was in the intersection of work and belief, in commitment to self (as Quaker) and others, that Quakers found the real test of their ethical labors.

Being a relief worker the Quaker way

The QPU placed great value on the importance of interpersonal relations and felt that to be not only humanitarian but also—and essentially—Quaker demanded that their

Figure 3. Discussing problems of the day. AFSC Archives.

relief work be guided by this commitment. The Quaker way of working required a considerable degree of closeness between the providers and recipients of relief. It was here that their work on themselves intersected most directly with their influence on others. They prided themselves on the fact that "the whole Quaker approach to human beings is through the individual."[45] In an oral history, one former volunteer highlighted this feature as the most distinctive part of Quaker practice: "My experience dealing with the Red Cross was that it was a much more impersonal operation. . . . I think the personal relationships in the Strip . . . with the refugees were of paramount importance. To make the thing work. Before I left there were demonstrations against the UN, but they were against the UN and not the Quakers" (see Figure 3).[46]

And, yet, the demands of the work, and most especially the need to reduce the refugee ration rolls, created serious problems for this method of interaction. Limited resources meant that the AFSC was under tremendous pres-

sure to bring the numbers—which everyone felt were somewhat inflated—down. Identifying fraudulent registrations and cutting the rolls required methods that posed fundamental challenges to people's sense of themselves as being Quakerly. Elsewhere I have described these methods— which included the use of informants, supporting the jailing of uncooperative *mukhtars* (village leaders), and the withholding of food to entire villages whose lists were felt to be too high (a practice Quakers referred to as "using food as a weapon")—and noted the discomfort AFSC workers had with these methods (Feldman 2007). Here, I explore further the ethical dilemmas that this work posed for the Quakers. Even as the majority defended their methods as necessary for their relief work, everyone in Gaza seemed to acknowledge that they were distinctly un-Quaker. Faced with a UN demand to reduce the ration rolls, the Gaza team "came to the conclusion that there is no way in which we could do it with methods in accordance with AFSC policies and standards which we practice elsewhere."[47]

The challenge of reducing the rolls brought into sharp relief what was ultimately the biggest ongoing dilemma for Quaker relief workers: how to balance their commitment to the ethics of interactions with their equally strong concern about the ethics of outcome. Putting the matter in precisely those terms, Charles Read commented:

> I think that it is inescapable that if we are to do a conscientious job through the United Nations, we must do some things in which our conscience will be troubled. . . . I do feel very strongly however, that equally as important to us as the means is the end which we are seeking, and I can not feel easy in my own conscience, jeopardizing the end altogether because we are not entirely happy about the means.[48]

Without agreement, yet unable to cease its work, the QPU did make use methods deemed to be "in direct contradiction to the philosophy of the Service Committee, and our own consciences."[49] A report on the reductions detailed some of the procedures. In addition to withholding rations and using informants, guards were placed in cemeteries to report on deaths, shrouds were issued for burials for the same purpose, and "new born infants received rations when the head of the family could report two false or duplicate registrations on the lists."[50] Using these means, the AFSC was able to reduce the ration rolls from around 245,000 to 210,987.

The discomfort associated with these methods created tremendous tension among the team. Although disagreement about various policies was common, this issue went to the heart of people's sense of themselves and their proper way of being. A camp leaders meeting in October 1949 revealed a broad range of attitudes:

> One camp leader pointed out that we are not supposed to cut real refugees from our lists, and that to do so is a real injustice. Another suggested that the Quaker technique demands trust; and that in this situation we cannot trust—therefore we must be prepared to use some kind of force. At another point in the meeting a further concern was expressed that non-Quaker means for achieving the desired end should not be used. One suggested that we are here, as any Quaker group is in any field, to spread good will, and that we cannot do that if we are too "tough." On the other hand, one pointed out that carrying false names without taking action against the fraud is also out of harmony with Quaker methods of procedure. . . . It was felt that further sharing of opinions in an effort to achieve common understanding must be the basis of all action taken in the matter.[51]

No consensus could be reached on this matter, and, even as the reductions were undertaken, some people continued to feel very adamantly that the methods being used were so far from Quakerly that they could not be justified. In a report back to headquarters on a visit to Gaza, in which he sat in on the meetings in which these concerns were discussed, an AFSC member expressed his concerns about such views: "While I have every respect for the right of every individual conscience on the problem of 'using food as a weapon,' I could not help but think that those who consider this problem a strong moral issue are the same ones who are unable to tackle the job of list reduction in what I would call a brave and honest way."[52]

A balance was apparently needed between empathy and toughness, between building trust and relying on force. Even as the language of these debates focused on the Quaker responsibility for ethical action, they highlight the importance of having a "partner" in such action. For Quakers to really enact their ethics—to be the persons they wanted to be—they were to an extent dependent on the ethical labor of the persons receiving aid. And, when people argued it was impossible to proceed in a Quaker manner because they could not trust, they were charging the refugee population with not participating in a shared ethical practice. It seems clear from both the oral histories and the archival record that AFSC volunteers faced difficulties in taking refugees seriously as ethical actors. Although refugees may have disagreed with the Quaker assessment, both of their ethical capacity and of the ethics of their efforts to retain places on the rations rolls, it was the Quaker sensibility that governed the relief project. This uncomfortable dynamic is a general feature of humanitarianism, in which only one party seems to have the privilege of being ethical (Agamben 1998; Malkki 1992, 1996). It was also connected to the particular features of the AFSC project. Precisely because, unlike some other humanitarian operations, Quakers did take refugees seriously as political actors, they seem not to have recognized their failure to take them as seriously as ethical actors.

The problem of refugee dishonesty was one with which Quakers struggled throughout their time in Gaza.[53] To some extent, Quakers judged these ethical failures to be a "cultural" problem. As the team leader put it, "there is an entirely different concept of honesty here which no one can expect to harmonize with Western concepts of honesty within a year or probably a century. It is not thought to be dishonest to try to get a double ration or to list false names in your family."[54] At the conclusion of her service, another AFSC volunteer reflected on the challenges of dealing with the "fluidity in ethics and relationships (as the western mind knows them)"[55] that she found among refugees. Characteristically, she was as critical of herself as of the refugees. Even as she laid some blame at the feet of a local culture in which "it was not morally wrong to 'play the game' (and try and get extra rations)," this volunteer was also acutely aware that AFSC capacities and attitudes contributed to problems in ethical relations.[56] Not speaking Arabic meant that it was tremendously difficult for the Quakers to truly enter into intimate relations with the majority of refugees; differences in sensibilities about hospitality and sociability meant that Quakers

were often on the cusp of rudeness. If interpersonal relations were crucial to the Quaker way, this cultural divide posed a serious challenge to its enactment.

In addition to such cultural problems, Quakers recognized that the pressures under which refugees were living made ethical action difficult. They seem to have struggled a bit with how much to "blame" refugees for ethical failings.[57] Under conditions of tremendous difficulty, refugees could be seen, to some extent at least, as lacking the freedom that seems an essential part of the capacity to be ethical, a point underscored by Foucault.[58] At the same time, the Quaker emphasis on ethical labor suggests another side to this equation, also noted by Foucault (1997). Ethical labor—the work of producing oneself as a certain sort of person—is itself a practice of freedom. That the Quaker way involved a commitment to bring out goodness in others, as well as an insistence on the ethical relation, helps explain the amount of attention AFSC volunteers paid to the ethical status of refugees.

Connected to their recognition of the relational character of ethics, Quakers debated how they should deal with refugees' perceived failings. Did they mean that refugees lacked the capacity to be ethical in the way that Quakers understood ethics? If so, what should be the proper relationship between them? Should the Quakers simply accept the limitations this trait imposed on their own ethical practice? Or, should they strive (regardless of refugee behavior) to exemplify the Quaker way? Many people certainly argued for the latter, even as the former seemed to dominate their practice. As one person commented, arguing that the team's response to the prevalence of dishonesty was itself un-Quaker, "as we tried to keep tabs on our distributions, we discharged more than a hundred employees because they did not conform to our ideas of honesty. In a smaller unit I feel sure we would have felt it necessary to work with the individual rather than summarily discharging him."[59]

As this last comment suggests, Quakers seem to have judged themselves for failing to work closely enough with individuals to "convert" them to their notions of honesty. Just as likely, however, the problem may have been that the Quakers did not entirely understand the significance of refugee actions. As noted above, the AFSC marked a clear separation between the ethical and the political. They seem not to have considered that refugees might not make the same distinction. Even as Quakers clearly recognized refugees as political actors who understood relief "to be their right, and in no way an act of humanitarian charity,"[60] they presumed a separation between this political judgment and the ethics of receiving aid.[61] Although it is impossible to determine with certainty the intentions of refugee actions, in trying to keep the rolls as expansive as possible, they seem to have been making political claims in what Quakers had identified as an ethical arena. To use a later language, refugees appear to have brought politics inside the "humanitarian space" (Agier and Bouchet-Saulnier 2004). It was this joining

of the ethical and the political that AFSC volunteers seem ill-equipped to understand. Here, the circumscribed relationship Quakers developed with refugees—the lack of political conversation—may have limited their ability to understand the ethical terrain.[62]

Conclusion

The ethics that guided the Quaker project in Gaza, and in whose terms the volunteers judged themselves, were concerned with both mission (the purpose and outcome of the project) and method (personal relations, the one-to-one encounter between aid worker and refugee). In the aftermath of the project, "kewpies" reached conflicting conclusions about their success. Even with the limitations inherent in the project, Al Holtz reflected, "it wound up before we were finished we had respect, and we respected, and we did a lot of good things after we got the thing all organized."[63] In fact, he went on to say, "I don't think there is the slightest question it is the most significant project that the Friends ever did." Other Quakers judged themselves more harshly. As Cassius Fenton put it in a report reflecting on the project, "we have yet to learn how to be efficient and to streamline a mechanical operation without losing intimate contact with the people with whom we wish to deal" and "our inability to show success toward an ultimate goal has enabled us with little hesitation to turn back our work to the UN."[64] Although in some ways their standards for themselves seem impossibly high, they illuminate the ethical field within which they operated.

This ethical field was expansive, with few actions or attitudes judged irrelevant for ethical consideration. Certainly AFSC volunteers in Gaza missed few opportunities to reflect on the ethics of their work. As this exploration indicates, however, there were limits to Quaker ethical practice. One such limit lay in the encounter with refugees themselves, in the limits of their capacity to approach refugees as ethical actors. In this regard, though, as in others, the QPU should be distinguished within humanitarianism. Quaker practice, as we have seen, did not tend to render refugees as mute victims, "speechless emissaries" as Liisa Malkki (1996) puts it. Although Quakers hoped to be ethical rather than political, they seem to have found it easier to understand refugees as political, rather than ethical, actors. Throughout their time in Gaza, Quakers operated with a degree of uncertainty about what their relationship with refugees should be, an uncertainty that necessarily had significant implications for their sense of themselves as well.

The Quaker "care of the self," evident in all their practices of self-reflection and redirection, was directed both inwardly and outwardly. In producing themselves as good Quakers, they hoped to have a positive impact on the world around them and, especially, on the advancement of peace. Although their demand for both "intimate contact" and

political resolution appears potentially contradictory, from the perspective of the Quaker way they were intrinsically bound together. It was through transforming the way people interacted with each other that Quakers hoped to remake the world. That this did not prove to be possible in Gaza did not shake the Quaker conviction in this belief. The QPU did, though, come to recognize that there was a genuine, and probably unresolvable, conflict among their multiple obligations—to the United Nations, the refugees, and themselves. To be a Quaker providing relief in Gaza was ultimately to be in an impossible situation; it also meant to continue to do the work in the midst of this impossibility.

What does this episode tell us about humanitarianism in the postwar period more generally? When AFSC volunteers judged their project to be un-Quaker, they were in effect conceding that it was humanitarian. Indeed, despite their insistence on a Quaker difference, in their dilemmas kewpies in Gaza were squarely in line with what would prove to be ongoing challenges for humanitarian actors. Indeed many of their conversations foreshadow current debates in humanitarian circles. Disagreements about what humanitarian action should be, about what constitutes a proper humanitarian ethics, has often led to splinters within this movement. For instance, Médecins Sans Frontiéres (MSF), the exemplary organization of the "new humanitarianism," was founded in response to what it saw as crucial ethical failings of the older standard-bearer of humanitarianism, the ICRC.

The ICRC interpretation of the neutrality principle has led it to privilege confidentiality and discretion in its work—believing that its highest ethical duty is to get the work done, a goal that requires the cooperation of states that appreciate such quiet (Terry 2002). However, MSF, while remaining nonpartisan, has made witnessing *(témoignage)* a cornerstone of its mission (Redfield 2005). We have already seen that the AFSC also understood witnessing to be central to its practice in the world, although the Quaker idea of witnessing has important religious connotations less central to the MSF concept (but see Taithe 2004 on religion and MSF). Further, as I have discussed as well, like other humanitarian organizations the AFSC entered into uncomfortable relations with governments and international bodies that put severe constraints on its capacity to witness for peace.

Another key feature of MSF practice is the idea of the "humanitarian space" (Agier and Bouchet-Saulnier 2004; Von Pilar 1999), a space apart from political strife that gives humanitarian actors freedom to work and victims the chance to live. Although only political work can solve the problems that require humanitarian action, MSF believes that it is not for humanitarians to do that work. As the organization put it when it won its Nobel Prize in 1999, "humanitarianism is not a tool to end war or to create peace" (Redfield 2005:336). Such neutrality has itself been challenged within the movement, with some people arguing for the impor-

tance of military humanitarian intervention. Disagreements within MSF over this issue led to the emergence of Doctors of World, an organization that engages in such advocacy (Rieff 2002; Taithe 2004). The AFSC—in a distinctly different way than groups championing military humanitarianism—has certainly strived to have a broader conception of its mission—to work precisely to "create peace." Indeed, the slogan that graces that AFSC website describes the organization as "Quaker values in action." While in the Gaza project, the organization was not fully able to do this work; in recent years its involvement with the Palestinian question has involved more action for peace and less "simply humanitarian" activity.[65]

Just as the Quakers in Gaza had to proceed in their work without resolving their concerns about its character, current debates within the humanitarian movement about whether this work should be more political, more closely tied to human rights campaigns, seem unlikely to be resolved.[66] If anything, it seems that there will be a continuing proliferation of approaches and organizations, and ongoing charges and countercharges. In the absence of a resolution of the proper domain of humanitarian action, it remains fruitful to focus attention on its practice. Anthropological engagement with humanitarianism, as a growing body of work already shows (Fassin 2006; Malkki 1996; Redfield 2005; Ticktin 2006), is particularly well poised to help us understand this practice and its implications for the variety of actors within this field. Consideration of an early moment in postwar humanitarianism highlights how now familiar challenges worked their way onto the humanitarian terrain. In the Quaker case, the rich combination of archival records (which describe detailed, on-the-ground debates) and oral histories (which offer reflections from a distance and out of the heat of the moment) sheds light on the long-term significance of such projects, both for the volunteers themselves and for the humanitarian field more generally.

The careful Quaker attention to relationships, and the difficulties that sometimes arose around them, does not only define AFSC practice, it suggests an important analytic angle for investigating humanitarianism more generally. Even in contexts in which the interpersonal dimension is not as centrally highlighted by humanitarian actors, we need to inquire into these relations. Doing so allows one to see humanitarianism as a tradition of "compromised action," in which humanitarian organizations can be distinguished not by whether they make such compromises but, instead, by which ones they make. Such compromises are not simply between the values of humanitarian workers and constraints of the mission but also between the demands of recipients of aid and the principles and models of humanitarian workers. As humanitarianism becomes ever more professionalized, with highly developed apparatuses ready for deployment as needed, it becomes perhaps even more important to insist on this point. Although such professionalization might

be thought to resolve some of these relational challenges (putting models in the place of contingent debate), the evidence suggests that they have, if anything, become more acute (Barnett 2005; Pandolfi 2003).

Although Quakers were particularly reflective about their anguish over many of the ethical compromises they felt forced to make to get the job done, such compromise was a dilemma that they share with other organizations. For the most part, Quakers and other humanitarian organizations have remained convinced that doing something is better than doing nothing, that the ethical failings of their projects do not outweigh the good they do. For the Quakers in Gaza this conclusion indicated a sacrifice of themselves (of their capacity to be fully Quaker) for the sake of the persons they were assisting. As some humanitarian organizations have become advocates for military intervention in the name of their principles (a position the Quakers could never take) the challenges that lie at the heart of humanitarian action have become even more fraught. Questions about whether the compromises are worth it, about whether doing something is in fact always better than doing nothing, continue to haunt humanitarian practice.

Notes

1. Because of the extensive use of information from archives in this article, endnotes replace in-text citations with regard to archival material.

2. AFSC, #55 FS Sect Palestine, "A Palestine Report," by Cassius Fenton n.d.

3. AFSC, #79 FS Sect Palestine, transcript of staff meeting, July 29, 1949.

4. AFSC, #174 FS Sect Palestine, Minutes of Foreign Service Executive Committee, November 17, 1948. The 19 points included the demand for autonomy, to aid those in need without discrimination, to use volunteers, and the insistence that the United Nations work toward a solution.

5. AFSC, #84 FS Sect Palestine, Report of visit of Dr. Descoeurdes to Southern Palestine, November 11–12, 1948.

6. AFSC, #84, From Arne Barkhaus to A. Schickel, on visit to Gaza, November 15, 1948.

7. As I explore in detail elsewhere (Feldman 2007), Palestinians are excluded from the Convention and serviced by UNRWA rather than UNHCR.

8. On the idea of international community, see Malkki 1994.

9. AFSC, #79, Transcript from Camp Leaders Meeting, July 15, 1949. Others suggested that it was okay to expose disagreement: "They [Gazans] have a perfect right to know that we do not always

agree, we must be very careful to show that we are not 'colonial administration.' "

10. Foucault describes ethics in these terms, as practices and techniques through which people work on themselves to shape their way of being in the world (Faubion 2001; Foucault 1988, 1997; Mahmood 2005).

11. Max Weber's distinction between an ethics of responsibility and an ethics of ultimate ends has some bearing on the dilemmas Quakers encountered in this regard. As he describes the distinction: "there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends—that is, in religious terms, 'The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord'—and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's action" (1946:120). For further discussion of these Weberian distinctions in relation to humanitarian practice see Didier Fassin and Estelle d'Halluin 2005.

12. Foucault talks about caring for others, governing others, and being guided by others as important modes of relation in the Greek *ethos.* No condition of equality is presumed in any of these relations.

13. As is well known, colonial enterprises frequently employed the language of aid in justifying their endeavors (Ahmed 1992; Dirks 1997; Hochschild 1999; Spivak 1988).

14. The meanings of the terms *religious* and *secular* are obviously themselves highly contested and shift over time (see Asad 1993, 2003). My use of them here follows that of the organizations themselves.

15. As David Brion Davis (1992) points out, Quaker abolitionism was not unconnected to their own material interests. At the same time, as Davis also points out, that Quakers stood to benefit economically from the end of the slave trade does not obviate either their importance to the movement, to which they "could provide what no other group seemed capable of: decision, commitment, and, most important, organization" (1992:29), or the relation between their involvement and their religious commitments.

16. The AFSC archives website provides a brief history of the organization: http://www.afsc.org/about/hist/birth.htm.

17. Frost also notes that government restrictions helped the AFSC avoid tackling head on divisions among Quaker groups about pacifism and proselytizing (1992:14).

18. See http://www.afsc.org/about/nobel/gunnarjahnspeech. htm.

19. They were reluctant, for instance, to work too closely with the doctor in charge of the Christian Missionary Society Hospital because "his evangelical tendencies are so overpowering that we would be immediately identified with the Christian proselytizing work, so that in a nation 95% Moslem I am sure we would be very unpopular" (AFSC #90 FS Sect Palestine, letter from Delbert Replogle to Howard Wriggins, December 28, 1948).

20. AFSC, #25 FS Sect Palestine, Letter from Cordelia Trimble, Gaza, to Charles Reed, Cairo, December 5, 1949.

21. AFSC, #9 FS Sect Palestine, "Notes on AFSC participation in UNRPR," n.d.

22. In one small expression of this concern, it was decided at a staff meeting in May 1949 that "this group should proceed in the true spirit of Friends and that each meeting should be sure to begin with a period of worshipful silence" (AFSC, #79 FS Sect Palestine Minutes of Staff Meeting, May 20, 1949).

23. AFSC, Oral History, Alwin Holtz, September 19, 1992.

24. AFSC, Oral History, David Walker, September 20, 1992.

25. AFSC, #9, Report to Brigadier Parminter from Howard Wriggins, March 3, 1949.

26. AFSC, Oral History, Alwin Holtz, September 19, 1992.

27. AFSC, #77 FS Sect Palestine, Minutes of Quaker–Military Meeting, April 17, 1949. At the second meeting, the word *security* was defined by the military as "keeping order, preventing trouble, preventing grumbling, preventing stealing and other breaches of the peace." The Quakers at the meeting suggested that, given the refugees' conditions, a certain amount of grumbling be tolerated. At this meeting, the responsibilities of the military were further elaborated to include "security; supervision of cleanliness of camps; keeping order during food distribution; social and moral aspects of camps; responsibility for legal bodies of camp, as the mukhtars; arrangement of tents and cabins in camp" (AFSC, #77 FS Sect Palestine, Minutes of Quaker-Military Meeting, April 20, 1949). The basic division of labor decided in these meetings was maintained once UNRWA took over from the AFSC.

28. At a staff meeting in October 1949, for instance, it was noted that "several sources of friction recently have apparently worsened our relationship with the army in area." These sources included unauthorized photography and excursions into military zones (AFSC, #79 FS Sect Palestine, Minutes of Staff Meeting, October 7, 1949).

29. This was not a problem unique to Gaza, as he also noted: "This would be a difficult pill to swallow in any man's country and UNRRA's difficulties in dealing with similar circumstances vis a vis the American army should be reassuring to us" (AFSC, #43 FS Sect Palestine, Letter from Howard Wriggins to Colin Bell, June 4, 1949).

30. AFSC, #93 FS Sect Palestine, Report on Gaza Trip from Gillespie Evans to Stanton Griffis, December 26, 1948.

31. AFSC, Oral History, Lee Dinsmore, September 19, 1992.

32. The Committee was established after many discussions of the problem in staff meetings proved "unfruitful and repetitive" (AFSC, #79 FS Sect Palestine Minutes of Staff Meeting, May 20, 1949).

33. AFSC, #77, First Draft of "Statement of 'Military-Police' Committee," July 20, 1949.

34. AFSC, Oral History, Alwin Holtz, September 19, 1992.

35. In the years since the Gaza project, the AFSC has become less hesitant about articulating political principles. Its website elaborates some these principles at http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/news/principles.htm.

36. AFSC, #174, Minutes of Foreign Service Executive Committee, November 17, 1948.

37. As Didier Fassin, among others, notes, humanitarianism is never really outside of politics (2004). For a critique of the politics of depoliticizing in humanitarianism, see Alex de Waal 1997.

38. AFSC, #53 FS Sect Palestine, letter from AFSC Gaza Unit to Clarence Pickett, AFSC HQ, October 12, 1949.

39. AFSC, #53 FS Sect Palestine, letter from AFSC Gaza Unit to Clarence Pickett, AFSC Headquarters, October 12, 1949. The letter went on to say: "They feel strongly that the United Nations are responsible for their plight, and therefore have the total responsibility to feed, house, clothe, and repatriate them. . . . Accordingly the relief we bring them appears to them to be their right, and in no way an act of humanitarian charity on the part of the United Nations."

40. AFSC, #95 FS Sect Palestine, Minutes of Staff Meeting, February 11, 1950.

41. AFSC, #75 FS Sect Palestine, Memo from Howard Wriggins, April 8, 1949.

42. AFSC, #233 FS Sect Palestine, Bernie Klausner, Supply Office Report for December 1949, January 1, 1950.

43. AFSC, #79, transcript of staff meeting July 29, 1949.

44. AFSC, #77, First Draft of "Statement of 'Military-Police' Committee," July 20, 1949.

45. AFSC, #80 FS Sect Palestine, "Concerns expressed at Campleaders meeting and Staff Meeting 13–14 October."

46. AFSC Oral History, Elwood Geiger, September 19, 1992.

47. AFSC, #24 FS Sect Palestine, letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, October 15, 1949.

48. AFSC, #24, letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, October 15, 1949.

49. AFSC, #80, "Concerns expressed at Campleaders meeting and Staff Meeting 13–14 October."

50. AFSC, #83 FS Sect Palestine, Measures Employed by the American Friends Service Committee to Reduce the Number of Rations Issued Refugees in the Gaza Strip, December 1949. Women who married native Gazans were also removed from the rolls; this was justified on the grounds that theirs husband would be responsible for them.

51. AFSC, #80, Minutes of Camp Leader's Meeting, October 6, 1949.

52. AFSC, #128 FS Sect Palestine, From Donald Stevenson to Bronson Clark, October 24, 1949.

53. A staff meeting in May 1949 confirmed that: "In general, the group took a 'dim view' of any lessening of personnel for our operations. To date, honest men are hard to find here, and therefore, though they could do the work from a technical point of view, local employees need close supervision" (AFSC, #79, Minutes Staff Meeting, May 20, 1949).

54. AFSC, #24, Letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, October 15, 1949. The letter went on to say: "If the people who accept them are suckers enough to do so, the responsibility is theirs. . . . Westerners are unquestionably too naive to cope with these people to whom this is an ordinary business transaction being conducted according to methods that business is usually conducted in the Middle East."

55. AFSC, #55, letter from one volunteer to another, September 12, 1949.

56. Interestingly, this particular volunteer was not Quaker herself, a fact that did not diminish her zeal for the Quaker approach: "To me the only important thing was to get the job done according to Quaker principles."

57. Quaker reports on the problem of inflated refugee rolls suggest sympathy for the difficult conditions that would lead people to lie (AFSC, #36 FS Sect Palestine, "Background Material on Magazy," February 16, 1949). This sympathy also complicated efforts to reduce the rolls. As Paul Johnson recalled in an oral history: "There were people who were terribly upset and were so sympathetic with the refugees that it was difficult for them to admit the circumstances were forceful and something had to be done" (Oral History Interview #601, September 19, 1992).

58. In this connection, Foucault cites the ancient Greek belief that "a slave has no ethics" (1997:286). Quakers were aware of both their own freedom and the relative unfreedom of the refugees in Gaza. They were also aware that in taking up ethical labor, one enters into complex and hierarchical relations with others. The "*ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others" (Foucault 1997:287). They seemed somewhat less aware of the ways that their actions directly impacted refugee actions. The decision to ask refugee to act as informers, to report on which of their neighbors had failed to record a death or had managed to add an extra name to their family record, necessarily put people in ethically compromised positions. It is not surprising that some informers sought to derive personal benefit from this work. People asked for things such as getting a tent and being allowed to put it where one wanted; getting a job as a clerk; having one's own family registered on the list (AFSC, #80 FS Sect Palestine, AFSC, #80 FS Sect Palestine, "Concerns expressed at Campleaders meeting and Staff Meeting 13–14 October").

59. AFSC, #55, "A Palestine Report," by Cassius Fenton n.d.

60. AFSC, #53, letter from AFSC Gaza Unit to Clarence Pickett, AFSC HQ, October 12, 1949.

61. In conversations I had with refugees in the late 1990s about this period, people seemed to judge this relief in both ethical and political terms. Abu Ayub, a refugee living in Shati camp, summed up many people's attitudes when he told me: "In the days of the Quakers and the UN the Palestinian people had only food and drink. I mean, it is like someone who stops someone else and keeps beating and beating him and at last he brings him food. The world countries were doing the same with us. They brought us food, blankets, cheese, dry dates and everything . . . what is the benefit?" (Interview, Shati camp, March 16, 1999). Some people saw this relief in even more sinister light: "Western imperialism made us beggars to remain weak and stop fighting Israel. Was it really out of pity for the Palestinian people? No, there was an aim behind this. What was this aim? That the Palestinian forget his homeland since he takes the flour sack" (Interview, Gaza City, March 11, 1999).

62. I am not attempting to adjudicate an ethical debate but, rather, to highlight the terms in which both Quakers and refugees seem to have understood their (and each others') actions.

63. AFSC, Oral History, Alwin Holtz, September 19, 1992.

64. AFSC, #55, "A Palestine Report," by Cassius Fenton n.d.

65. The current AFSC campaign around the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is explicitly political, calling for support for "nonviolent resistance and refusal (of occupation) in Israel and Palestine" (see http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/default.htm).

66. A debate between Nicolas de Torrente, Director of MSF-USA, and Paul O'Brien, of CARE, in the Harvard Human Rights Journal exemplifies the state of the discussion (De Torrente 2004; O'Brien 2004).

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