

Prayer or Protest?

The Radical Promise of Voluntary Poverty in the Anti-Nuclear Fast for Life, 1983

*While he is lying there
Perishing, my good name in the world
Is perishing also. I cannot give way,
Because I am King. Because if I gave way,
My Nobles would call me a weakling, and it may be
The very throne be shaken.*

—William Butler Yeats, *The King's Threshold*

A hallmark of twentieth-century religious pacifism in the United States was the experiment with the idea and practice of non-violence as a means of social and political change. This article argues that as activists pursued change through nonviolent protest, they attempted to embody a spiritual challenge to political policies, using the body itself as a dramatic and often extreme tool of protest. The more dramatic the use of the body, the more complicated the interpretation of nonviolence became. Where fasting was concerned, traditional nonviolence was layered with additional issues of voluntary poverty, biblical self-sacrifice, and the uncertain question of violence. Blurring the boundaries between the private, ascetic ritual of fasting and the public act of a political protest, certain

fasting campaigns challenged accepted notions of nonviolent protest with the confrontational challenge of an *open-ended* fast. The prospect of the suicide of those involved in open-ended fasting appeared contrary to the steady, reformist practice of traditional nonviolence and further complicated the role of religious ritual in political protest as practiced by American pacifists in the 1970s and 1980s.

This article traces the activism of Charles Gray, a Quaker, whose experimental quest of voluntary poverty in the 1970s and 1980s climaxed in a campaign called the Fast for Life, a 1983 protest intended to halt the nuclear arms race. Gray's interest in hunger, poverty, Third World solidarity, and the human cost of the nuclear arms race helped him devise a program of action that bore witness to not only the evils of overconsumption and Third World poverty but also the patterns of Western affluence and defense spending that exacerbated those evils. With a core group of fasters, Gray engaged with a contemporary politics of hunger in much the same way as other activists who fasted in protest of a particular goal. However, they also engaged with a longer historic tradition of voluntary poverty, seeking to reject and retreat from modern society as much as they attempted to reform and critique it. By using the extreme spiritual challenge of open-ended fasting as a political protest, Gray and his fellow activists attempted to extend the boundaries of traditional nonviolent pacifism by radicalizing its practice and its potential. Their efforts speak to the significance of smaller campaigns of nonviolent pacifism on the margins of social movements, whose dramatic and radical nature offers an important dimension to the study of fasting and nonviolence and their place within pacifist social movements during the late twentieth century.

As scholars have demonstrated, the expression of nonviolence with communities of pacifists was often characterized by a pursuit of individual change within the context of a larger program for social change.¹ Where pacifists engaged in specific political campaigns, they cited the influence of figures such as Gandhi, César Chávez, and Martin Luther King as models of the pure expression of nonviolence.² Applying and extending the promise of nonviolence as embodied by these figures, pacifists in the postwar United States attempted to combine the most apt expressions of religious-based dissent with the spectacle and symbolism of political protest. Whereas many

pacifists would practice pure nonviolence as a personal witness, others found public outlets for their witness.³ The Plowshares movement is perhaps the most famous of these, as these mostly Catholic activists challenged (and continue to challenge) the state through dramatic acts of civil disobedience.⁴ However, other communities, campaigns, and individual activists have mounted similar challenges to state power, war, and social ills by combining elements of traditional nonviolent pacifism and extreme acts of protest designed to challenge not only the public but the activists' own sense of bearing witness as well.⁵

Overlap between religious dissent and peace movements has always been substantial, and scholars have paid plenty of attention to how Protestant pacifists, the Evangelical left, and the "peace churches"—Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren—opposed war and violence in the twentieth century.⁶ In the midst of the so-called "conservative revival" of the 1970s and 1980s, however, this dissent took on added dimensions, as progressives attempted to mobilize a mass movement comprised of ordinary, middle-class Americans with a palatable public appeal and a safe, traditional message of nonviolence and peace that evoked the "moral prestige" of leaders such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and, in some ways, Jesus Christ.⁷ In many ways, activists in the late 1970s and early 1980s envisaged a return to the expression of traditional nonviolence not for its performative qualities or its newsworthiness but for its potential to instill a revolutionary spiritual peace in the individual. The performance of Gandhian *satyagraha* in the early 1980s, argued Joe Peacock of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation in a 1983 article, "places primary emphasis not on recruitment, but on *speaking the truth* through both words and deeds. Speaking the truth, according to Gandhi and King, is the most effective way (and ultimately the only way) to reach people's consciences."⁸ Hence, ideas of asceticism, voluntary poverty, and suffering in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed became staples of the nonviolent activist's "tactical repertoire."

Fasting was a key way to achieve this. As acts of protest, fasts can be situated within a global history of pragmatic, and largely secular non-violent resistance; in this guise "hunger strike" is a more appropriate term.⁹ Yet religious pacifists tended to regard fasting as much more than a secular act of extreme protest. As a personal ritual of spiritual purification,

sacrifice, and penitence, fasting worked on a level much deeper than the hunger strike. When pacifists expressed their own personal and religious justifications when fasting in political protests, the divide between the secular, pragmatic hunger strike and the religious, personal fast became amplified. This divide, I argue, is illustrative of the problems pacifists faced in promoting their cause to the wider peace movement, and to the public, in their campaigns for change. As the Fast for Life advertised itself as open-ended, it courted additional criticisms about the nature of nonviolent pacifism, inviting ideas of martyrdom into a dialogue ostensibly about the human cost of nuclear weapons.

These ideas responded to a rich yet complex history of social protest that has characterized the experience of Christianity in the United States. More importantly, campaigns of protest involving fasting defined themselves as radical, if not extreme, attempts to effect social or political change through a basic, almost primal Christian ritual. Fasts undertaken in the pursuit of social change can be as much about the personal and spiritual effects of fasting as about their political consequences. Hunger strikes, on the other hand, often take place outside of the margins of religious life and primarily operate as political campaigns.¹⁰ Within the history of nonviolent action, however, fasting as both a spiritual and political pursuit owes much to the ideas of poverty and suffering popularized by Gandhi.¹¹ His philosophy of nonviolence in the pursuit of social change incorporated both pragmatic and moral agendas, speaking to the potential of nonviolent action to influence public and governmental opinion, while at the same time demonstrating the purity and spiritual strength a commitment to nonviolence could fashion in the individual.

A Heritage of Voluntary Hunger

By the early 1980s, the explicit challenge of power and its abuse by fasting was by no means a new phenomenon in American peace movements. Political fasting in the United States owes much to its Puritan origins. Puritan communities in New England used fasting, prayer, and other acts of self-humiliation to continually remind them of the perils of failing to meet the standards set for them by God and the Bible.¹² This staunch use of fasting in social life—which was at once political, religious, and

cultural—was first and foremost a spiritual practice. In later generations of colonial life in America, the religious ritual of fasting would be employed as a reactionary tool, adding more layers to this ancient, almost primitive practice.¹³ Just before the Revolutionary War, the colonies used public fasts as a measure of protest within an environment of deteriorating relations with England. Days of fasting and prayer, retaining some of their spiritual significance as developed by the Puritans, were laden with added political potential. The Continental Congress also set aside a public day of fasting and prayer for all colonies in 1775, in an attempt to unite the various individual fast days that had been occurring sporadically in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and other colonies since 1768.¹⁴

The idea continued, however, most importantly in times of crisis. Abraham Lincoln proclaimed three days of “humiliation, fasting, and prayer” during the Civil War, and in the wake of Watergate, the U.S. Senate recommended a similar national day in April 1974. Edward Tiryakian argues that such a continuation of the ritual can be seen as “a reaffirmation of deep-seated collective values grounded in Puritan culture,” emphasizing the endurance of puritanical ritual in the midst of adversity, as well as the value of collective purification in response to the dangers of materialism and affluence.¹⁵ These ideas were to be diffused throughout various sectors of American life since their Puritan origins; one significant application was within movements of spiritual non-violence, which rose in significance in the twentieth century.

It was not until the 1920s that American Christians took note of fasting in the context of nonviolent social or political change. They were most likely less motivated by theology than by ideals of Christian pacifism inherited from the peace churches, from the Social Gospel, and in response to the Great War, looming crises of democracy in Europe, and domestic industrial turmoil. News of Gandhi’s campaigns in India and South Africa hinted to Americans, especially to more radical Christian pacifists, of the potential use of nonviolence as a political tool.¹⁶ While Gandhi fasted as an ascetic pursuit, he also employed lengthy fasting as a tool in his nonviolent campaigns. Many American pacifists felt this too coercive and were reluctant to adopt Gandhian nonviolence, preferring instead conventional, Western methods of protest and resistance.¹⁷ Still,

Gandhi's ideas began to gain credence in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Due to the efforts of A. J. Muste, and his leadership of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, along with such groups as the Peacemakers and the Committee for Non-Violent Action, Gandhian nonviolence was by the early 1940s, as Danielson argues, "an institutionalized component of American pacifism."¹⁸

Pacifists in the 1950s and early 1960s experimented with fasting as a powerful act of social protest that highlighted individual activists' commitment to nonviolence and peace. Activists in the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Peacemakers, and the Catholic Worker expressed this most explicitly in the 1950 Fast for Peace, a weeklong demonstration of protest and prayer in Washington, D.C. Using the "teaching and example of Jesus" to guide their action, the small group emphasized that the protest was an act of penitence and self-purification, as well as an indictment on the recent decision to develop the hydrogen bomb.¹⁹ They cited a "willingness to give life itself if necessary in the cause of peace," yet having next to no impact on public opinion or military policy, the Fast for Peace was abandoned. While its political aims were fuzzy, it is better seen in terms of a personal expression of faith and inner spirituality than a pragmatic program of political action.²⁰

Around the same time, Catholic pacifists were also drawing attention to the links between war, peace, and hunger among the world's poor. Traveling to Rome in 1965, Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day undertook a ten-day fast—more a spiritual witness than a protest—to coincide with the final session of the Second Vatican Council. Day's pacifist stance, and her nonviolent action of fasting, was steadfastly rooted in her Catholicism; she constantly asserted a commitment to mercy, compassion, and suffering, hoping to follow the example of Jesus.²¹ This was, essentially, the core of radical Christian nonviolent pacifism, and Day's ethic would be iterated and reiterated by successive pacifists as the rationale behind true Christian responses to social ills, such as poverty, war, injustice, and oppression of various types. Fasting in the way intended by Isaiah, as "the faithful person's pathos for and with the poor," was behind this form of public ritual, however political its aims might appear.²²

These currents of pacifist thought, utilizing fasting as a public act, also fit within religious—and secular—traditions of austerity and voluntary poverty, which by the 1970s were gaining increasing visibility within alternative social movements. Environmentalists, radical feminists, and other countercultural groups advocated a program of personalism as a critique of mainstream cultures of consumerism and waste, while also developing protest cultures of various persuasions.²³ Around these countercultural trends existed communities of religious pacifists interested in an embodied spirituality that also rejected dominant cultural ideals of capitalism, individualism, and upward mobility. In some ways adopting the ritual and custom of earlier proponents of voluntary poverty—Puritans, Quakers, Amish, Shakers, and so on—those practicing simple living as a religious pursuit in the 1970s and 1980s adopted an ascetic lifestyle removed from the dominant contours of mainstream life.²⁴ Often motivated by the challenges and promise of social activism in the 1960s, these ideals found expression in a wide variety of personal, social, and political pursuits in the 1970s, and it is in this context that fasting and voluntary poverty as a form of anti-nuclear protest reemerged.

Charles Gray and Voluntary Poverty

Charles Gray's story fits somewhat neatly within this context of postwar pacifism that sought to challenge popular notions of consumerism and violence that permeated American society. Like other pacifists, Gray organized his life according to the personalist ethic of social responsibility and radically downsized his contributions to mainstream life. A Quaker and conscientious objector, with degrees in sociology and political science from the University of Colorado, founder of the first Colorado chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, and a member of the World Federalists, Gray seems like the quintessential pacifist. He had been inspired by the writings of Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Thoreau in his late teens and, for a time, practiced simple living as a means of purifying his personal ideals and solidifying his own "break from the establishment."²⁵ Gray also developed a long-standing interest in analyzing and rectifying the uneven distribution of wealth in the world, and he defined his pacifism in economic as well as social and spiritual terms.²⁶ Involved in

the civil rights movement in Denver in the 1950s and 1960s, Gray also embraced civil disobedience against the Vietnam War. Relocating to Eugene, Oregon in the mid-1960s, Gray engaged in tax resistance and was involved in protests against nuclear power plant construction in Oregon in the 1970s.

However, Gray felt burdened by his wealth and lifestyle. His first wife, Leslie Brockelbank, had inherited a small fortune shortly after their marriage, but even through philanthropy and organizing for social justice, Gray was still uncomfortable. The “rather soft liberal pacifism” he and his wife practiced was not enough, nor was their limited engagement with civil disobedience and tax resistance. Inspired by their involvement with the revolutionary anarchism of the Movement for a New Society (MNS), Gray and Brockelbank retreated from their comfortable suburban life, living in a collective and dedicating themselves to change in both personal and institutional ways.²⁷ For Gray, this lifestyle was liberating:

By 1977, I felt that the all encompassing threat facing humanity demanded a complete reconciliation of our personal lifestyles with our most precious ideas and that such personal change was necessary if essential institutional change was to occur.²⁸

Brockelbank refused to join Gray on the next journey of his personal quest, and their marriage ended. Gray’s interest in simple living, in abandoning material possessions, and in minimizing in the strictest sense his consumption and waste demonstrated his attraction to a radical prefigurative lifestyle that he intended to push to its absolute limits.

Gray’s interest in a variety of systemic threats to human life and dignity, and his desire to do something about it, found its clearest expression in what he called the “World Equity Budget” (WEB): a means of living that was both environmentally and socially sustainable, in identification and solidarity with the world’s poor. Embarking on the WEB in 1977 at age 52, Gray limited his earnings and his expenditures, scavenging for food and supplies, living rent free wherever he could, and riding a bicycle. He did carpentry and odd jobs around Eugene and Portland to earn enough to get by, still limiting his spending to a sustainable level and saving the rest. Limiting spending to \$75 per month

did not amount to an easy lifestyle, however much satisfaction it may have brought him. In 1989, Gray wrote:

In a sense, the WEB for me was not my personal ideal, but rather a compromise with my social circle, an effort to establish a principle of equal sharing, a principal less extreme than real identity with the world's poor who had far less than their equal share.²⁹

While he could not hope to live in absolute poverty, his identification was at least a partial form of repentance:

For me the WEB was a morally defensible philosophical position, not a personal preference. My personal preference, my feeling for the poor, my guilt at so long being complicit in oppression pushed me toward a level of consumption at least closer to that of the world's poor than the level of the WEB. The desire to at least partially identify with the world's poor became another reason to push my expenditures further downward.³⁰

Gray found poverty liberating, on a personal, ideological, and spiritual level. His alienation from society was offset by him feeling “in tune with a larger humanity and a more nonviolent morality” and reveling in his rejection of the “throw away society” of consumption and waste.³¹ There were, however, dangers to such a pursuit larger than social isolation and living at the mercy of the elements. “The danger of practicing what you preach,” wrote Gray, “is that it can become an end in itself, a searching for personal purity or salvation.”³² Such an individualist pursuit also had limited potential to involve the practitioner of voluntary poverty with wider social movements. Gray's philosophy was that the practice of voluntary poverty should never be an isolating expression of embodied spirituality; it should have a wider social, economic, and political basis; thus Gray's outlook operated within dual spheres of small-scale personal change and broader social change. The latter would come to dominate his actions as he began to seek a more public way to dramatize his commitment to addressing poverty by fasting.

Inspired by such texts as Scott and Helen Nearing's *Living the Good Life* (1971), E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* (1973), and Duane Elgin's

Voluntary Simplicity (1981), Gray's analysis of his experiment in simple living is illustrative of how pacifists made sense of small-scale challenges to systemic ills. The role of individual action as a form of resistance was often undertaken as a means of escape from institutional structures that were primary causes of violence or oppression. As Gray explained:

Part of our praxis should focus on our personal relationship to the social systems of institutionalized violence. As we analyze the social structures of oppression we do well to reflect on our own participation in those structures. Where are we in the structures of capitalism, consumerism, classism, racism, sexism, and militarism? How extensive is our complicity in them?³³

For Gray, removing himself from such systems meant a full-scale retreat from mainstream society. His resistance was local, personal, and radical, and it emphasized Gray's commitment to a downward mobility at odds with prevailing social trends of materialism and consumption.³⁴ It was not, he argued, a form of personal witness, nor was it intended as "the way to start a social movement." Rather, Gray's WEB was more like "an effort to reduce the tension between the way we lived and the beliefs we professed. There was a great gap between our lifestyles and our ideals."³⁵ Gray's ideas correlated with a rich heritage of simple living in the United States. Building on the ideas of Henry David Thoreau, proponents of simple living, homesteading, and naturalism pursued peace and personal fulfillment through an ascetic lifestyle removed from the dominant contours of mainstream life.³⁶

Retreating from society, though, was not Gray's primary aim. Although many alternative movements advocating a communal lifestyle and an escape from the depersonalizing, demoralizing confines of mainstream life had erupted in the 1960s and 1970s, Gray's pursuit was different. He avoided the confines of this rejection of social and political life, he did not move to the countryside, and he did not live on the WEB to achieve some kind of personal purity. His aims were grounded in his perceptions of global injustice and poverty and his ideas about systemic violence and oppression.³⁷ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the most pertinent crisis brought about by this system was the nuclear arms race, and it was toward

challenging this crisis that Gray turned his attention. In doing so, he would apply his private practices of voluntary poverty and asceticism to the very public forum of political protest, seeking to add his own body, and his own life, to the tactical repertoire of nonviolent pacifists as they campaigned against war and injustice.

Hunger, Nonviolence, and Political Fasting

Taking cues from Gandhi in India and union leader César Chávez in California, Gray began to devise a radical kind of protest that he hoped would be a catalyst to halt the arms race. A carefully planned fast, undertaken with the right amount of publicity and spiritual preparation, could be the inspirational lever that the peace movement needed. The act of fasting itself would also make an explicit link between nuclear arms expenditure and problems of hunger and poverty, especially in the Third World, just as the Brandt Commission had done in 1980 with its emphasis on North-South global development.³⁸ The idea was not new, but Gray's radical, dramatic departure from limited fasts to an open-ended fast certainly was. Jim Douglass, a theologian and pacifist then based at the Pacific Life Community near the Bangor Naval Base in Washington state, had previously expressed the links between hunger and nuclear arms by fasting as protest. In 1976, Douglass and his colleagues traveled to Washington, D.C. to fast for 30 days in an appeal to presidential candidates Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford to abandon the nation's nuclear weapons program. Although unsuccessful, Douglass still felt the experience was worthwhile, maintaining that when fasting, "I could experience, in a small way, the hunger of the world. It brought me closer to those people who experience fasting involuntarily."³⁹ The same way Gandhi had advocated fasting campaigns as an act of last resort, Gray also felt that the peace movement had exhausted its options, so far failing to curb the nuclear arms race, and more drastic, dramatic action was needed.⁴⁰

With these notions at the forefront of his planning, and the practical and spiritual preparation of the WEB well under way, Gray began to devise plans for an open-ended fast intended to halt the nuclear arms race. With him on this endeavor was Dorothy Granada, Gray's second wife,

whom he met in 1978 at a blockade of the Trojan nuclear power plant in Rainier, northwest Oregon.⁴¹ Granada, an Episcopalian of Mexican and Filipino heritage, had originally pursued a life of prosperity and upward mobility, married to a Harvard-trained physician and directing the medical nursing program at the University of Chicago. However, the Vietnam War sparked in her a realization that the white, middle-class world that she had joined was not for her. A “downward mobilization” followed, which led her to join Gray, his pursuit of a life of austerity, and eventually, the Fast for Life.⁴²

In 1980, the pair began planning the fast in earnest. Gray and Granada came to the conclusion that first strike nuclear missiles—those that were eventually deployed in western Europe in November 1983—needed to be stopped by a bold and daring peace movement. As they explained, the dual targets of the Fast for Life were “the silent holocaust of hunger and the impending holocaust of nuclear fire.”⁴³ They were convinced that their act of protest was appropriate, considering the magnitude of the nuclear threat, and determined that it would be morally persuasive and, above all, nonviolent. Through their fast, an act of “love and moral suasion,” they would approach some kind of “truth” as Gandhi had envisaged.⁴⁴ But, to succeed, it needed to be dramatic. The couple demonstrated their seriousness by announcing the fast would be open-ended, beginning on the 38th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima—6 August 1983—and ending only when the superpowers made “significant steps” toward curbing the arms race. The campaign motto—“To affirm that all humanity has a right to live freed from the pain of hunger and the dread of holocaust”—emphasized the link between the ideas of direct and structural violence; that is, between the potential peril of nuclear war and the diminishing of social services and aid to poor nations that the arms race had occasioned.⁴⁵

Furthering this link between weapons and hunger was the inspiration Gray and Granada drew from Mitch Snyder’s Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) in Washington, D.C., a homelessness advocacy group with a radical Christian background. The CCNV had engaged in direct action and campaigns of fasting to secure access to funds and shelter from city authorities and church groups for the local homeless.⁴⁶ “Deeply impressed” with the CCNV’s use of protest, especially at it

confronted the government in Lafayette Park across from the White House, the experience for Gray and Granada “deepened our resolve to have the Fast become a symbol of the connection between world hunger and the arms race. The two were bound together and we hoped our fast would be a contribution to the peace movement, symbolizing that connection.”⁴⁷ Subsequently, they formally announced the Fast for Life on 19 June 1982, right in the wake of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament and the massive outpouring of public support for a nuclear freeze. Gray and Granada were also joined by two others, Canadian forester André Larivière and former Japanese Buddhist monk Mitsuyoshi Kohjima, and support fasts were organized in France and West Germany, as well as in many locations around the United States.⁴⁸

The Fast for Life’s ultimatum might seem like a hunger strike in the purest political sense, but as Granada would reiterate, she thought of it “more along the lines of a prayer than a hunger strike with specific demands . . . the Fast will be a plea to reach deeper into ourselves and others to do the same.”⁴⁹ In essence, it was envisaged as an alternative form of civil disobedience, one that did not suffer from the same marginalization as other forms of resistance that were illegal. The fasters hoped that their own campaign would inspire the public just as Gandhi and Chávez had done, attracting mass support due to the moral and spiritual weight of their sacrificial act. Gray and Granada envisaged a slow, steady snowballing of public sympathy in support of this group of ordinary citizens undertaking an act of extraordinary commitment. Gray predicted an international movement that would gain momentum and support from millions of citizens, until the United States and the Soviet Union—along with the other nuclear powers—were pressured to agree to the Fast campaign’s proposals and halt the arms race, eventually disarming their entire nuclear stockpiles by 1989.⁵⁰ He also imagined ambitious numbers of active supporters, foreseeing “an international, open-ended fast with 2,000 persons entering the fast in cohorts of a hundred or so every week or two.”⁵¹

This international, ecumenical campaign was not overtly religious, despite the precedent of other pacifists’ fasting campaigns. The Fast for Life essentially aimed to pose a challenge to conventional anti-nuclear protest, while also operating as a more radical and broader challenge to

basic principles of American life, by graphically evoking the real-life consequences of poverty, hunger, and complacency. However, supporters and colleagues within the peace movement were apprehensive about such an ambitious campaign. Many worried that politics did not respond to public demands in such short time frames; as one correspondent argued, “by the natural timetable of your fast, there is an ultimatum which the political system is not going to meet.”⁵² Others expressed concern that an open-ended fast was itself a violent act, and some raised issues of “moral blackmail,” arguing the Fast was morally coercive, rather than persuasive.⁵³ Echoing wider rifts between the moderate peace movement and its radical fringes, critics warned that the Fast for Life would damage a peace movement that by 1983 had spent much effort building mainstream public support and harnessing public opinion in preparation for the 1984 elections. An extreme campaign of radical nonviolence—even without the presence of lawbreaking civil disobedience—was out of step with a pacifist anti-nuclear movement interested in developing comprehensive challenges to state power and a mainstream movement that gave scant regard to such extreme acts of nonviolent protest.

Publicizing Suicide?

The dramatic nature of the Fast for Life was intentionally provocative. Some supporters agreed, noting that it was “sobering” to think that the danger of nuclear war was so high “that some people are getting down to the base line of things. They are putting their own lives on that line.”⁵⁴ It was ordinary people that could make the difference, argued the Fast campaign and its supporters, by appealing to the public via their intense personal commitment and its corresponding moral value. The simplicity of the act of fasting could encourage sympathy and support; as another supporter argued, the Fast cohort were “eleven unimportant people who have thrown in their lot with the poor and hungry of the world, that’s all.”⁵⁵ Their sacrificial message was promoted as a small, spiritually pure undertaking, whose religious and moral dimensions transcended ideology, strategy, and policy, both in the religious and secular worlds.⁵⁶ As such an undertaking, the Fast aimed to be a very direct, personal campaign, appealing to people’s consciences and avoiding getting mired in politics, as the Freeze Campaign had done.⁵⁷

That the group of fasters would commit suicide if their conditions were not met was of some concern to supporters and fellow pacifists alike. This risk was out of step with traditional nonviolent pacifism and also with Christian understandings of fasting as a personal ascetic ritual. Suicide as a religious act comes from Buddhist traditions of self-sacrifice and is most often connected in the United States with Quakers who self-immolated to protest the Vietnam War.⁵⁸ Traditionally, suicide is sin, and according to Terrence O’Keeffe, we should think of those who starve themselves for a purpose *other* than starvation as engaging in what he terms “instrumental self-killings,” which are not suicide.⁵⁹ As a hunger strike, starving oneself to death had been often used as a political tool, largely in Irish struggles for independence and later, for prisoners’ rights.⁶⁰ Yet fasting as a Christian ritual, as interpreted by most theologians, is not a manipulative tool. Scot McKnight argues that fasting is “a response to a sacred moment, not an instrument designed to get desired results.”⁶¹ The practical utility of a political fast, however, was co-opted by pacifists intending to protest war and injustice in a direct and public manner.

For Gray and the Fast for Life, this unusual mixture of unlimited body poverty with the ambitious public call for a halt to the nuclear arms race was a radical departure from accepted traditions of protest as practiced by religious pacifists. Instead, conventional Christian elements of purification, penance, and humility were modified to suit the goals of the political campaign.⁶² As Gray argued, the goal of the Fast for Life was not purity, nor guilt, nor penance: “We aren’t trying to punish ourselves,” he claimed.⁶³ Instead, Gray argued that the potential for mass dissent existed, if people were willing. It would require “hundreds or thousands of people . . . in both mundane and dramatic acts to put their own lives on the line” before change was possible.⁶⁴ Converting people, through a drastic demonstration of commitment, would put the peace movement one step closer to success, while realizing another goal of social and attitudinal change at the core of many pacifists’ aspirations.

As the Fast for Life continued to publicize its agenda, it attracted both support and criticism from the peace movement, the churches, and other sectors. It was the particular use of the open-ended fast that divided activists and colleagues within the peace movement alike. Many individuals were forthcoming with endorsements, including Daniel Berrigan,

Helen Caldicott, Daniel Ellsberg, as well as members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the American Friends Service Committee, and Clergy and Laity Concerned. Most clergy refusing to endorse the Fast for Life did so on the basis of its harmful nature; Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit argued that while Gandhi undertook open-ended fasts, he "never intended to commit suicide."⁶⁵ The councils of both the U.S. and International Fellowship of Reconciliation also decided against endorsing the Fast, as did the International Peace Bureau.⁶⁶ Activist Shelley Douglass, a member of the national council of the U.S. Fellowship, who presented the Fast for Life's appeal to the council for endorsement, felt that many council members were unsure about a radical action undertaken by a small number of people that was aimed squarely at changing the direction of government policy and influencing mass public opinion.⁶⁷ This questioning of the controversial nature of an open-ended fast in a peace movement committed to nonviolence also reflect the troubled compromise between fasting as a dramatic protest tactic and an ethic of activists' religiosity.

Publicly, the Fast for Life attempted to straddle two spheres. On one hand, it was an act of personal religious faith for a group of four spiritually committed individuals. On the other, it was a political campaign with a core set of goals, however vaguely defined they were. This dual nature of the Fast for Life campaign posed a challenge for Robin Knowlton, hired as the campaign's media coordinator. Knowlton had little prior experience in public relations, yet relished the challenge to "translate something spiritual and something political, something Eastern into layman hardened news. Could the Fast translate in writing? In to radio? Over television?" she wrote after the campaign was over.⁶⁸ She stressed that from the outset, the credibility of the fasters must be established and emphasized for media.⁶⁹ This was a serious challenge; they mustn't come across as extremists, nor should they minimize the nature of their commitment to appeal to a larger public.

This was a difficult task, given the implications of the fasters' deaths if they were to carry out their open-ended fast to its ultimate conclusion. Writing later, Gray observed that their public relations campaign was one that took care to emphasize personal commitment, but not so they might be labeled extremists: "We didn't want to come off as fanatical purists. We

weren't interested in sackcloth and ashes."⁷⁰ Supporters, though, were divided. As one wrote, "if a FASTER had placed himself or herself in the hands of God, ready to give his or her life, why the feverish quest for media coverage?"⁷¹ Other correspondents raised issues of the fallibility of working within the political sphere. According to one activist, real peace would come not through oppositional activism but through individual transformations toward perceiving the "unbreakable web of life." Depending on the media to convey the urgency that individual consciences are appropriately alerted assumed that "peace can be promoted in the same way as toothpaste or beer."⁷² It also seemed to some like a surreal exercise in suicide. Fast for Life correspondent Molly Sandperl felt that such an act of open-ended fasting did not belong in the peace movement:

It is discouraging to think that the Fast seemed real to so many people while I found it unreal. It was a strange and eerie sight to behold a white-middle-class American church group singing hymns to encourage some one on to a futile and painful death.⁷³

Evidently, the moral quandaries raised in the public act of fasting often outweighed questions of its application in the realm of political reform and public relations.

The Question of Efficacy

As the Fast for Life attempted to straddle the two spheres of personal religious ritual and ambitious public protest, it encouraged further criticism. Shelley Douglass was "uncomfortable with tying everything to governments or large numbers," seeing small incidents of activism as "a sort of widow's mite that in my eyes would signify a tremendous change."⁷⁴ The Fast would be most useful, she felt, as a small action of individual witness, deepening the commitment of existing activists to nuclear disarmament and strengthening the personalist mission, but Douglass balked at the Fast's grand plans for soliciting millions of supporters and persuading sympathy from governments. Indeed, the specter of Gandhi hung over the fasters' appeals; they hoped to follow his example and lead mass nonviolent movements for social change through

campaigns of political fasting. Similarly, Fast for Life organizer Hal Darst despaired at these dual aims: “it got caught on the horns between being a political/organizing effort, and a spiritual witness,” he later lamented. “Trying to be both was a mistake.”⁷⁵ Helen Woodson, herself a purist in radical Christian nonviolent action, argued that the Fast would only be of value if it were “left in the hands of God . . . To attempt to manipulate it, control it, evaluate it is to place it on the political level, subject it to human terms and become overly concerned with success and effectiveness.”⁷⁶

Could a small-scale fast hope to convert the public and translate into a wider political movement? Many pacifists worried that the fasters’ deaths would be meaningless, and less ambitious acts of bearing witness were the more suitable recourse in an age when mainstream media largely failed to translate nonviolent activism into public action. According to Dan Lawrence of Clergy and Laity Concerned, for example, “I believe very strongly that prayer in my closet (where I can’t be seen) is tremendously more effective than if I blow my bugle out on the street.”⁷⁷ Yet the Fast for Life tried to do both, and criticisms centered on the way the fasters expressed vague ideas of “the human family,” “connection with the spirit,” and “chains of human energy,” as a *Los Angeles Times* piece noted.⁷⁸ The fasters also struggled to promote themselves as credible arms control activists, inevitably finding themselves alienated as “kooks,” “freaks,” or “extremists.”⁷⁹

The difficulty for radical nonviolent pacifists in appealing to the mainstream peace movement, or to the public, was one the fasters hoped in vain to overcome via a strong focus on personal commitment and spirituality. Their attempt alone is significant, as it demonstrates the willingness of activists to extend the application of nonviolence within the peace movement of the early 1980s. Experimenting with strategies and tactics that would succeed in capturing public attention and political support was—for some pacifists—a major challenge of the anti-nuclear movement. For others, such an attitude was folly and only succeeded in compromising the principles of genuine nonviolence, personal protest, and lifestyle politics that operated primarily in individual and communal contexts, with little view to public impact. These two perspectives highlight the tension between “pure” or “true” nonviolence and its

reformist impulse, one that the Fast for Life challenged with its radical notion of self-sacrifice as it combined the politics of nuclear disarmament with the religious impulse of asceticism and hunger.

Forty-One Days in Oakland

Beginning on Hiroshima Day, 6 August 1983, the Fast for Life continued for 41 days with Gray, Granada, Larivière, and Kohjima subsisting only on water at a Catholic Worker house in Oakland, California. They courted national media, including the *New York Times*, liaised with high-profile supporters such as Coretta Scott-King and Daniel Ellsberg, and corresponded with fellow fasters in 163 U.S. cities, as well as the seven additional open-ended fasters in Paris and Bonn. By the fifth week of fasting, the four Oakland-based fasters were having second thoughts. Neither mass public support nor an encouraging response from the peace movement had materialized. Moreover, their efforts were severely hampered by the downing of a Korean Air Lines flight by Soviet fighter pilots on 1 September.⁸⁰ The public outcry and government response fiercely denounced the Soviet Union, while the fasters viewed the incident as “a tragic example of the arms race which the Fast sought to end.”⁸¹ In the midst of a lackluster public response, the group felt that their contribution to the peace movement had been significant enough, and any sacrifice would be unnecessary. As each broke their fast, supporters felt alternately confused, relieved, and betrayed by this anticlimactic ending, fearing the Fast for Life had ended in a dismal failure, but nevertheless sparing the lives of their colleagues and friends.

Organizer Hal Darst felt the implications of this inglorious end were wider reaching, writing to Gray that “the real pain—the shattering of my spirit, came more from the recognition that, not the Fast but the whole American peace movement, had failed.”⁸² For Darst, the failure of the Fast for Life was emblematic of the futile pursuit of public success and political reform that characterized the strategies of the mainstream peace movement. Robin Knowlton, on the other hand, recognized that while the Fast had failed in real terms, its success as a spiritual witness, and as a “vehicle of hope” to others in the peace movement, was its most lasting gift.⁸³ Like all forms of nonviolent action, Knowlton felt that fasting remains the

more difficult, more moral, and more life-affirming form of protest, although it is certainly a more extreme form of nonviolent action.⁸⁴ This extremism, coupled with the personal nature of fasting, had led to an expression of nonviolence that was at once curious and troubling, given its nature as a public, political protest.

Within the larger context of radical religious campaigns of prayer and protest, the Fast for Life might seem a typical, dramatic statement of personal commitment to peace. It inspired Christian activists that such severe acts of witness could, as one Fast supporter noted, “authenticate my beliefs.”⁸⁵ This gave the core group of fasters a kind of moral and spiritual authority as prophetic figures, engaged in the creation of a more spiritually pure community dedicated to social change. Indeed, supporters observed that Gray and Granada appeared to them as “two saints of Christian pacifism” engaged in messianic acts of “redemptive power.”⁸⁶ Smaller support fasts, demonstrations, and letter-writing campaigns surrounded the Fast for Life, highlighting the nature of this community it had created but also furthering the ideals behind the Fast as “an experiment in truth in the Gandhian sense.”⁸⁷ These actions, undertaken collectively, brought society closer to a vision of personalism in action.⁸⁸ Indeed, Gray felt the Fast for Life’s most substantial contribution to peace was more personal than religious, demonstrating a traditional understanding of Protestant pacifism in his approach to ritual, spirituality, and social change.⁸⁹ Asked by a journalist for an Oakland weekly newspaper whether he believed in God, Gray responded:

I consider myself a religious person in my definition, involving the sanctity of life. I’ve been affected by many religious traditions, but I feel quite agnostic . . . When I pray, I pray more that *people* will hear and respond than some deity . . . I don’t deny that there is a god. But I feel that if there is one, then people are the hands of God.⁹⁰

In this spirit, Gray saw his actions in the same context as other famous religious pacifists who had taken an extreme commitment to protest as an act of prayer. Just like Gandhi, Chávez, Jesus, or the Buddhist monks who had engaged in self-immolation in protest of the Vietnam War, fasting was an act of sacrificial power and spiritual strength. Its resonance,

though, was broader, emphasizing the powerful, persuasive nature of such an extreme and dramatic act and its role in social and political struggles.

Gray's religious ideals speak to the broad changes in religious thought and practice that characterized American spiritual life in the 1970s and 1980s. Declining church membership, and a change within traditional churches from an emphasis on ritual and dogma to a focus on individual spirituality, altered the way Christians interacted with the world around them. This found expression in the rise of fundamentalism and various forms of evangelical Protestantism that found popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s. But at the same time, changes in the role of religion and spirituality in American life prompted progressive Christians to seek more socially oriented expressions of their faith; communal activism, voluntary poverty, and identifying with the poor and oppressed were common examples of these changes. Personal responsibility was advocated, as well as the avoidance of "cheap grace." True discipleship, progressives argued, came at a cost.⁹¹

In occupying both the private and public realms of religious ritual and political protest, Fast for Life bears more resemblance to the 1950 Fast for Peace than to the fasts of Gandhi or Chávez.⁹² Political goals relating to nuclear disarmament were mixed with personal affirmations of spiritual strength, based around Christian rituals of prayer and an understanding of fasting as "a way for people to enhance their spiritual life."⁹³ However, the Fast for Life was more extreme and occupies an unusual place within the postwar history of radical nonviolent pacifism. Unlike minor fasts, usually designed to accompany larger protest campaigns in imbuing activists with spiritual purity, the Fast for Life aimed at a goal much more grandiose, hoping to follow in the footsteps of other modern religious prophets who used fasting as a key campaign tactic, winning public support and political recognition in the process. As an act of Gandhian nonviolence, the Fast for Life exhibited less rigid ideas about theological ritual and promoted fasting as more of a fluid interpretation of spiritually minded social activism. In doing so, *especially* as it declared the intention of its participants to die for the cause, it posed a radical challenge to polite nonviolent pacifism and the insular, personal campaigns of spiritual purity so often practiced by Catholic Workers and their contemporaries. Its story offers an interesting addendum to the role of fasting—and

hunger strikes—within the history of nonviolent social movements in the twentieth century.

Gray was certainly no liberal reformist. As a lone proponent of simple living on his WEB, he operated outside the system on the smallest scale—like Thoreau—rather than confronting it. He was an environmentalist in the most isolated sense, yet his ideas were, as Lawrence Buell has suggested, more situated “in the spirit of Gandhism and primitive Christianity.”⁹⁴ Practicing voluntary poverty, in defiance of contemporary trends of consumption and in solidarity with the world’s poor, was to Gray the essential first step in pursuing a larger program of social change. This larger program, he envisaged, would begin with the Fast for Life, a challenging act of radical pacifism that would inspire ordinary people in their thousands, then millions, to confront the rampant injustices of military technology, consumption, and war that ravaged the modern world. A campaign based around asceticism was the most appropriate arena in which to publicize and confront these issues, for as Rodney Stark reminds us, “it is the opportunity to *choose* poverty—a choice not given to the poor—that seems central to the appeal of asceticism.”⁹⁵ It is in this vein that Gray’s story, and the brief, dramatic Fast for Life, can be understood, not just as a personal crusade against hunger, poverty, and the nuclear arms race but as a radical challenge to the practice of nonviolent pacifism in the United States. Gray’s extreme approach demonstrates an alternative to the steady pursuit of social change as practiced by the many movements of nonviolence. Instead, with the imminent threat of global nuclear catastrophe a primary concern, Gray embarked on a radical, public campaign symbolic of his own personal commitment to saving the world.

NOTES

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1. The literature here is vast, but recent historical studies include Scott H. Bennett, *Radical Pacifism: The War Resisters League and Gandhian Nonviolence in America, 1915–1963* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Religion and War Resistance in the Plowshares Movement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
2. Particularly noteworthy here are studies such as Leilah Danielson, “‘In My Extremity I Turned to Gandhi’: American Pacifists, Christianity, and Gandhian Nonviolence, 1915–1941,” *Church History* 72, no. 2 (2003): 361–88; Joseph Kip Kosek, “Richard Gregg, Mohandas Gandhi, and the Strategy of Nonviolence,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1318–48; and Sean Scalmer, “Globalising Gandhi: Translation, Reinvention, Application, Transformation,” in *Rethinking Gandhi and Nonviolent Relationality: Global Perspectives*, ed. Debjani Ganguly and John Docker (New York: Routledge, 2007).
3. For a thoughtful examination of these two spheres of activity in a pacifist community, see Robert D. Holsworth, *Let Your Life Speak: A Study of Politics, Religion, and Antinuclear Weapons Activism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
4. The literature on the Plowshares is also vast, but for some analyses of their philosophy and tactics as radical practitioners of nonviolence, see Jeffrey D. Brand, “Protest as Prayer: Plowshares Actions and the Building of Religious Community,” *Journal of Communication and Religion* 20, no. 2 (1997): 41–52; Nepstad, *Religion and War Resistance*; and Kristen Tobey, “Performing Marginality: Identity and Efficacy in the Plowshares Nuclear Disarmament Movement” (Ph.D. diss., Divinity School, University of Chicago, 2010).
5. The use of the body in such personal and performative protest has been examined in works as diverse as Joel P. Rhodes, *The Voice of Violence: Performative Violence as Protest in the Vietnam Era* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); Tina Managhan, “Shifting the Gaze from Hysterical Mothers to ‘Deadly Dads’: Spectacle and the Anti-Nuclear Movement,” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 4 (2007): 637–54; and Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
6. Essential studies here include, respectively, Patricia Faith Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture between World War I and the Vietnam Era*

- (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); and Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
7. On “moral prestige,” see Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels against War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 27; and Andrew Sabl, *Ruling Passions: Political Offices and Democratic Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 253–54.
 8. Joe Peacock, “Catching the King’s Conscience,” *Nuclear Times*, January 1983, 14. Emphasis in original.
 9. The difference between “hunger strikes” and “fasts” and the religious nature of each is complicated and often depends on context. Here, I use the term “fast,” as the subjects of this article regarded hunger strikes as those acts making a more specific political demand. For a detailed analysis of hunger strikes, see Stephen J. Scanlan, Laurie Cooper Stoll, and Kimberly Lumm, “Starving for Change: The Hunger Strike and Nonviolent Action, 1906–2004,” *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 28 (2008): 275–323.
 10. Recent literature, much of it from sociologists, has emphasized the international nature of hunger strikes as a dramatic form of political nonviolence. The scope of hunger strikes, as Scanlan, Stoll, and Lumm have demonstrated, is diverse. The authors identify a large variety of hunger strikes distinct in geographical, ideological, cultural and social status. The use of hunger strikes in arenas such as civil rights, prison reform, antiapartheid, antiwar, and labor movements suggest their flexibility, yet as the authors identify, religious figures and activists only occupied 3.8 percent of their sample data from twentieth-century hunger strikes. Prison hunger strikes dominated this data. See Scanlan, Stoll, and Lumm, “Starving for Change,” 291–99.
 11. The two most famous works advocating Gandhi’s example of nonviolence are Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), and Erik Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969). Sharp, especially, deals with the pragmatic implications of Gandhi’s program of action, as well as a large history of political fasts, as an illustrative example for contemporary nonviolent action campaigns. See his discussion in Sharp, *Nonviolent Action*, 360–68.
 12. See John Chester Miller, *The First Frontier: Life in Colonial America* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 50–53.
 13. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 31.

14. Derek Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress, 1774–1789: Contributions to Original Intent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 84–85.
15. Edward A. Tiryakian, *For Durkheim: Essays in Historical and Cultural Sociology* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 301.
16. For an insightful discussion, see Kosek, “Strategy of Nonviolence,” 1318–48.
17. See Leilah Danielson, “Not by Might: Christianity, Nonviolence, and American Radicalism, 1919–1963” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 29–30. See also Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914–1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 218–19.
18. Danielson, “Not by Might,” 107.
19. Fast for Peace Committee brochure, 1950, quoted in Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune*, 63.
20. Fast for Peace Committee article in *Peacemakers* newsletter, 25 April 1950, quoted in Leilah Danielson, “‘It Is a Day of Judgment’: The Peacemakers, Religion, and Radicalism in Cold War America,” *Religion and American Culture* 18, no. 2 (2008): 231.
21. See Eileen Egan, “Dorothy Day: Pilgrim of Peace,” in *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, ed. Patrick G. Coy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 109–10.
22. Scot McKnight, *Fasting* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), xxi, 101.
23. On personalism, see Holsworth, *Let Your Life Speak*, 7–12.
24. The literature here is scattered, but notable historical works include Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011); Lawrence Buell, “Downwardly Mobile for Conscience’s Sake: Voluntary Simplicity from Thoreau to Lily Bart,” *American Literary History* 17, no. 4 (2005): 653–65; and Rebecca Kneale Gould, *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
25. Charles Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Author, 1994), 10.
26. See Kera Abraham, “Peace through Poverty: The Simple Rich Life of Charles Gray,” *Eugene Weekly*, 13 July 2006, 1.
27. Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 11–12. For a history of the MNS in the 1970s and 1980s, and a thorough examination of its radical, lifestyle-oriented approach to social change, see Andrew Cornell, “The Movement for a New Society: Consensus, Prefiguration, and Direct Action,” in *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*, ed. Dan Berger (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).
28. Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 12.

29. Charles Gray, "Hanging to the Cliff Edge," *Aisling Magazine* 17 (1995), <http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM17/Cliff.html> (accessed 17 June 2014).
30. Gray, "Hanging to the Cliff Edge."
31. Gray, "Hanging to the Cliff Edge."
32. Charles Gray, "The World Equity Budget, or Living on About \$142 Per Month," in *Downwardly Mobile for Conscience Sake*, ed. Dorothy Andersen (Eugene, OR: Tom Paine Institute, 1995), 110.
33. Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 8.
34. See Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), esp. chap. 5.
35. Gray, "The World Equity Budget," 109.
36. The literature in this area is varied, but for a general survey, see David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
37. In addition to the writings of Gandhi, Richard Gregg, Thomas Merton, and Thoreau, Gray paid close attention to global trends in poverty, consumption, and government spending, by following the World Bank's annual *Human Development Report*, as well as other statistical analyses of world population, income, expenditure, and growth. His conclusions on the relationship between global poverty and the cost of nuclear weapons resembled those of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's 1963 manifesto entitled "Man's Right to Freedom from Hunger." B. R. Sen of India had initiated the idea in 1960, and it was scientists such as Australia's Sir Mark Oliphant that made the link explicit between hunger and expenditure on nuclear weapons. See Arnaldo Cortesi, "Manifesto Spurs U.N. Food Drive," *New York Times*, 15 March 1963, 7; and "'Halt Arms Race' to Aid Hungry," *Canberra Times*, 16 March 1963, 3. In 1980, similar conclusions were reached by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, chaired by former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt. See Brandt's own analysis of the Commission and its aims, in Willy Brandt, *Arms and Hunger*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).
38. See Independent Commission on International Development Issues, *North-South: A Programme for Survival: Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues* (London: Pan Books, 1980).
39. Quoted in "Trident Protestor Ends Fast," *Tri-City Herald*, 27 December 1976, 7.
40. Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 7, 59–62.
41. James Rosen, "A Hunger for Peace," *Express* (Oakland), 9 September 1983, 8.
42. Rosen, "A Hunger for Peace," 9.

43. Dorothy Granada and Charles Gray, "Fast for Life: A Report of an Experiment in Nonviolence," 1 May 1984, 7, Fast for Life Records, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison (hereafter FFL Records), Box 1, Folder 1.
44. Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 6, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1.
45. Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 1, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1. On direct and structural violence, see Johan Galtung and Tord Höivik, "Structural and Direct Violence: A Note on Operationalization," *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 1 (1971): 73–76.
46. On the CCNV and its activities, ideas, and strategies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see Cynthia J. Bogard, *Seasons Such as These: How Homelessness Took Shape in America* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003), chap. 1. Snyder had met Daniel and Philip Berrigan in prison in the early 1970s and, inspired by their commitment to faith and social justice, formed the CCNV shortly after his release in 1972. His own fasts were extended affairs; in 1982, for example, Snyder fasted for 63 days, and in 1984, for 51 days. See Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 118–19.
47. Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 61–62.
48. Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 8–9, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1.
49. Dorothy Granada to Helen Woodson, 2 February 1983, FFL Records, Box 4, Folder 14.
50. See Charles Gray et al., open letter, [early 1980], FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 2.
51. Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 7, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1.
52. Tony Scarr to Dorothy Granada and Charles Gray, 24 August 1983, FFL Records, Box 4, Folder 34.
53. See, for example, Mary Ellen Eterno to Fast for Life, 7 September 1983, FFL Records, Box 5, Folder 5.
54. Wendy Tripp, unpublished copy of open letter to politicians, religious leaders, and newspapers, 25 July 1983, FFL Records, Box 4, Folder 11.
55. Nancy Hale, quoted in Elissa Melamed, "A Disarming of the Heart," Fast for Life Media Update, n.d., 2, Robin Knowlton Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison (hereafter RK Papers), Box 1, Folder 1.
56. See Dan Lawrence to Fast for Life, [February 1984], FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 19.
57. Peter Klotz, Fast for Life questionnaire, [1984], FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 20.
58. See Sallie B. King, "They Who Burned Themselves for Peace: Quaker and Buddhist Self-Immolators during the Vietnam War," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 20 (2000): 127–50. Gray remarked in an interview that upon first hearing of protestors who burned themselves to death, he thought they were "crazy." Later, though, he saw that "they very

- consciously took their lives as a prayer, as an effort to draw attention to the horror of the war." Interviewed by Dio Neff on KVMR (Nevada City, CA), 14 June 1983, audio recording in FFL Records, 1482A, Tape 1.
59. Terence M. O'Keeffe, "Suicide and Self-Starvation," *Philosophy* 59, no. 229 (1984): 349–50.
 60. See, for example, George Sweeney, "Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 3 (1993): 421–37; and Padraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990). Gray argued in a June 1983 interview that while the recent prison hunger strikes led by Bobby Sands in Ireland were "the most vivid example" in recent memory of dramatic use of hunger as protest, they were tied to a "different issue" with more specific demands. Interviewed by Dio Neff on KVMR (Nevada City, CA), 14 June 1983, audio recording in FFL Records, 1482A, Tape 1.
 61. McKnight, *Fasting*, xxi.
 62. See Romara Dean Chatham, *Fasting: A Biblical Historical Study* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1987), 82–84.
 63. Gray, "World Equity Budget," 116.
 64. Gray et al., open letter, [early 1980]. See also "First Step: A Proposal for an International Campaign against First Strike Weapons," brochure, n.d., RK Papers, Box 1, Folder 7.
 65. Quoted in Gordon Oliver, "Open-Ended Fast Tool That Divides Activists," *National Catholic Reporter*, 12 August 1983, 7.
 66. Oliver, "Open-Ended Fast," 7.
 67. Shelley Douglass to Charles Gray and Dorothy Granada, 18 May 1983, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 11. See also Dan Ebener, "A Fast for Life," *Fellowship*, May–June 1983, 19.
 68. Robin Knowlton, "Media Summary," n.d., RK Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.
 69. Robin Knowlton to Bart Tibetts and Sam Hope, 5 September 1986, RK Papers, Box 2, Folder 49.
 70. Gray, *Toward a Nonviolent Economics*, 38.
 71. Molly Sandperl, Fast for Life questionnaire, [1984], FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 20.
 72. Jim Gordon to Fast for Life, 15 January 1984, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 16.
 73. Sandperl, Fast for Life questionnaire.
 74. Shelley Douglass to Charles Gray and Dorothy Granada, 18 May 1983, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 11.
 75. Hal Darst, Fast for Life questionnaire, [1984], FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 20.
 76. Helen Woodson to Scott Kennedy, 7 March 1984, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 20.

77. Dan Lawrence to Fast for Life, [February 1984], FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 19.
78. Sandy Banks, "'Maybe We'll Touch Hearts,' Easter Says," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 August 1983, B1.
79. For a discussion of these issues, see George Levenson, Fast for Life questionnaire, [1984]; and Jim Gordon to Fast for Life, 15 January 1984, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 20 and Folder 16, respectively. See also transcript of comments made by Daniel Ellsberg at a Europeans for Nuclear Disarmament press conference, 3 May 1983, RK Papers, Box 1, Folder 7.
80. Granada and Gray recalled that in the political climate following this incident, there was "no chance of any positive action in the capitol." This view was supported by two sympathetic politicians, Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Representative Ron Dellums of California. See Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 16, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1.
81. Tony Scarr to Charles Gray, 12 April 1984, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 12.
82. Hal Darst to Charles Gray, n.d., FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 20.
83. Robin Knowlton, media report to Charles Gray and Dorothy Granada, 7 March 1984, RK Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.
84. Robin Knowlton, letter to author, 8 May 2010.
85. Ben Richmond to Charles Gray, 5 January 1984, FFL Records, Box 2, Folder 18.
86. Eugenia Durland, letter to the editor, *Fellowship*, July–August 1983, 28.
87. Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 6, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1.
88. For example, organizers estimated over 150 support fasts took place in 24 countries. Granada and Gray, "Fast for Life," 11–12, FFL Records, Box 1, Folder 1.
89. For a thorough discussion of these ideas, see Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune*.
90. Charles Gray, quoted in Rosen, "A Hunger for Peace," 11. Emphasis in original.
91. On the concept of "cheap grace," see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller, rev. and unabridged ed. (London: SCM Press, 1966). See also Holsworth, *Let Your Life Speak*, 29.
92. Interestingly, César Chávez's 1988 fast campaign was also called the Fast for Life. For a brief summary, see Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 137.
93. Dorothy Granada, interviewed by Michael Dixon on KCBS (San Francisco), 16 August 1983, audio recording in FFL Records, 1482A, Tape 3.
94. Buell, "Downwardly Mobile," 655.
95. Rodney Stark, "Upper Class Asceticism: Social Origins of Ascetic Movements and Medieval Saints," *Review of Religious Research* 45, no. 1 (2003): 7.

