



Food Fight

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Our society and our world face a crisis of hunger. I focus here on hunger,

- because everyone has to eat, which makes “bread” our most elemental requirement;
- because food production leads to issues of the environment, for a diminished environment will not and cannot “bring forth” as intended;
- because food consumption leads to the cluster of issues around “consumerism” and the mad pursuit of more commodities, in the futile hope that they will make us safe and happy;
- because food distribution raises economic questions between haves and have-nots, about who gets what, on what terms, and by whose decision;
- because there is an overlap between hunger for food and “spiritual hunger” and the connection and tension between the two is crucial for our common life.

In short, “hunger” touches the great practical questions of our contemporary world and drives us back to theological wonderment.

Given the theme of “hunger,” I formulate this reflection as a “food fight.” The struggle for food between those who have advantage, resources, markets, and leverage with those who lack those advantages is a long-term fight that is waged in

The “food fight” extends throughout the Bible—the struggle for food between those who have much and those who have little. The fight betrays two contrasting ideologies or theologies about food: the conviction that the world is a closed system of limited resources versus the view that the creation is a process open to the continued gifts of a God who is anything but parsimonious.

many modes. The great struggles are finally about “bread,” with the term “bread” standing for all the dimensions of wealth, control, status, and the capacity to be an agent in one’s own history.

The Bible itself is a venue for that long-term food fight. The fight for food is a fight between ideologies about food, or theologies about food, or explanatory narratives about food. The tension in the Bible itself is a counterpoint to the tension we ourselves know about. Each of us is variously involved in a food fight concerning the legitimacy of our own hungers and the pressure of the hungers of others that impinge upon our cache of food.

PART I: MONOPOLY—ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE FOOD FIGHT

Here, I trace out these two ideologies of food to consider how that food fight may matter to our local congregations. The first of these trajectories is based on the conviction that the world is a closed system of limited resources. The accent is upon scarcity. The emotive result is anxiety about not having enough. The practical consequence consists in practices and policies of accumulation that aim at monopoly.

The defining terms of this ideology are scarcity, anxiety, accumulation, and monopoly. The enactment of this ideology consists in consumerism (which in food may lead to unhealthy obesity and in policy may lead to agribusiness that seeks to force all the production possible), protected by a strong military that guarantees the safety and security of the entire system.

PHARAOH AS SYMBOL FOR SCARCITY AND MONOPOLY

In the Old Testament, Pharaoh is the agent, symbol, and metaphor for a food system that is rooted in anxious scarcity and enacted in accumulation on the way to monopoly. Pharaoh functions as a metaphor, which makes the Exodus narrative endlessly contemporary. Whatever he may have been historically, Pharaoh functions as the recurring agent of anxious scarcity. His endless mantra is, “Make more bricks” (Exod 5:4–19). The bricks are needed to construct more storehouse cities (Exod 1:11), and the function of the storehouse cities is to accumulate more food and more grain until Pharaoh controls all of it. He is presented in the narrative as one with an insatiable appetite for more, the Great Accumulator.

1. Pharaoh appears already at the very beginning of the Israelite story in Gen 12. Indeed, Israel cannot tell its story of covenantal alternative without reference to Pharaoh, who is the indispensable durable counterpoint. Because of a famine, Abraham and Sarah are forced to go to Egypt for food (Gen 12:10). The matter is not explained. The narrative simply assumes that when everyone else is out of food, Pharaoh still will have enough. Pharaoh of course has food because the Nile River is endlessly productive and because Pharaoh is a genius at administrative authority who knows how to work the irrigation system. Beyond that, he is a monopolizer who has the capacity to defy even a circumstance of famine. The nar-

rative is terse, but nevertheless reports that Pharaoh was attracted to Sarah, beautiful wife of Abraham, and, “the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house” (v. 15). The food of the monopolizer never comes cheaply. From the outset, women have been a bargaining chip in the food fight among powerful men. The fact that the narrative happily resolves the treatment of Sarah does not detract from the plot line concerning the avarice of Pharaoh who assumed, given his food monopoly, that he was entitled to whatever he could possess.

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2. A long time later in the narrative, we learn that Pharaoh had two bad dreams, two nightmares. The first dream concerns seven sleek and fat cows that were devoured by seven cows that were thin and ugly (41:2–4). The second bad dream concerned seven ears of grain that were plump and good. But seven ears of grain, thin and blighted, swallowed up the seven good ears (vv. 4–7). Like every dream, these dreams are vivid and concrete, and we are to notice the contrast. The contrast bespeaks indulgent well-being and parsimonious stress. In the nightmares, moreover, the thin stuff prevails and defeats the good stuff. The verbs are “ate” and “swallowed,” verbs of ingestion of food. These are food dreams.

3. Pharaoh had to reach outside his entourage in order to get an interpretation of the troubling dreams. Pharaoh finds Joseph, a young Hebrew who was a jailed outsider, regarded as an enemy of the state. Joseph is cleaned up, shaved, given proper clothes, and brought before Pharaoh, the accumulator (41:14). Pharaoh patiently tells him his dreams, using the terms of contrast, “fat and sleek . . . poor, very ugly, and thin,” “full and good . . . withered, thin, and blighted,” but with two additions. Now the cows are “poor” and the stalks of grain are “withered.” It is as though in the retelling, the extremities of the bad in the dreams are underlined.

Joseph knows immediately, because, says he, it is “not I” but God who will interpret. The dreams are about the coming famine that will be “very grievous” (v. 31). The irony is that the one with everything has a nightmare about loss. The peasants who had little likely had no such dream, because they had not enough to lose.

4. The nightmare, now interpreted, leads to new policy. The nightmare is grounded in anxiety, and anxiety drives policy. Pharaoh seeks an administrator to manage the nightmare crisis that is coming. Joseph recommends that Pharaoh find someone who is “discerning and wise” (v. 33). Not surprisingly, it is Joseph himself who is the only candidate for the post. Before he is nominated, Joseph presents a plan to Pharaoh about how to manage the scarcity to come. Pharaoh is taken with the plan and appoints Joseph over his realm (41:40–45). Now we have an Israelite who will take care of the nightmare of food scarcity that has already propelled the great accumulator toward monopoly.

5. Joseph introduced draconian food policies (Gen 47:13–26). The peasants, without food of their own, had successively to bargain away their money and then their land and then their livestock, and finally their bodies. In exchange for food from the great accumulator they become Pharaoh’s slaves. Slavery, a given in the book of Exodus, is the outcome of the food policies of monopoly in the book of Genesis. The force of monopoly is so acute that by the end of the narrative, the newly recruited slaves, victims of the food policy of Pharaoh, are grateful for their own enslavement: “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be slaves to Pharaoh” (47:25). And the narrator adds laconically, “So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh....The land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh’s” (vv. 20, 26). The narrator does not call attention to the most ironic dimension of the narrative. The implementation of the food policy of monopoly that eventuated in slavery is accomplished by an Israelite! Leon Kass characterizes the narrative achievement as the full “Egyptianization” of Joseph.¹

To be sure, Gen 45:1–8 finds promise in Joseph’s policies, but if we observe those policies and practices of monopoly critically, we see the downside. Pharaoh in his massive power, supported by an ideology of supreme authority, could imagine himself autonomous and free to do what he wanted.

In the belated criticism of Pharaoh in the Bible, the limit on monopolizing power is voiced in prophetic and poetic utterances (Ezek 29:2; Isa 19:5–7), but of course such prophetic imagination lies well beyond Pharaoh—or Joseph. They are practical men who move from their nightmare of scarcity, and by their immense social force they imagine they can fend off the threats about which they dream in their haunted nights.

INCORPORATING PHARAOH’S VISION

It was easy enough to establish Pharaoh as the “bad guy” in Israelite narrative. He was an easy target that evoked no sympathy in Israel. But remarkably, Pharaoh’s ideology of scarcity, anxiety, accumulation, and monopoly could not be kept at pharaonic distance. It would enter right into the midst of Israel’s own life in a way that skewed and distorted Israel’s covenantal faith.

1. In the biblical tradition, Israel anticipated the force of this ideology coming into their own midst. It may be that such foreboding came “after the fact,” after they had seen the impact of that ideology on their common life, but even so, it speaks powerfully.

In the only Torah commandment on kingship, Moses warns against the power of accumulation, because accumulation aimed at monopoly contradicts covenant:

[Your coming king] must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to

¹Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003) 550–572.

you, “You must never return that way again.” And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. (Deut 17:16–17)

The recurring favorites of all accumulators are “horses, women, silver, and gold.” But all of that is only “food” writ large.

The alert of the Torah is matched by the mocking speech of Samuel who anticipates the terrible consequences of the coming of monarchy in Israel (1 Sam 8:11–17). The subject of Samuel’s speech is taxation and the draft, but the undercurrent is that the king will have an insatiable appetite for self-indulgence, for perfumers, cooks, and bakers. The accumulator will seize grain and flocks (food), and reduce all to slavery. The horrified anticipation is that organized greed will skew all social relationships in the interest of aggrandizement, and the confiscation will run from food to the military, an undifferentiated package in a world of organized appetites.

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2. It turns out that these anticipations in Deut 17 and 1 Sam 8 were in fact responses to the regime of Solomon, who radically shifted the society of Israel away from a covenantal economy to an economy of accumulation in which the strong could take from the weak in the service of an uncurbed appetite for more. In the horizon of Israel, Solomon becomes the great embodiment of scarcity, anxiety, accumulation, and monopoly. Who would have thought that Israel’s covenantal commitments were so readily vulnerable to the incursion of Pharaoh’s ideology? But Solomon is Pharaoh’s son-in-law (1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:24; 11:1)! It takes no imagination to think that Solomon set out to prove to his in-laws that he was competent in their great game of greedy self-indulgence.

First Kings 4:1–6 reports on the king’s bureaucracy, an organization of power that some interpreters believe was appropriated from Egyptian models. Of particular moment is the last named official, Adonirim, son of Abda, who was “in charge of the forced labor.” The term, recurring in Solomonic reports, echoes Pharaoh’s labor policy. The characterization is of a regime that has reduced free members of society into service to the crown, most especially for the construction of self-aggrandizing monuments to monopoly—the temple (5:13–18), his fortifications, his palaces, and his storehouses (9:15–23), a regime whose huge work force required 550 supervisors (9:23), a vast program that claimed the resources and people-power of society, all in the service of royal anxiety.

The project cost lots of money. Thus in 1 Kings 4:7–19 we find an organizational chart of Solomon’s tax-collecting apparatus, an organization that is worked out to fine detail. It is clear that there were no exemptions from the taxation that

transferred wealth from peasants to urban elites. It is noted, moreover, that two of the tax officials, Ben-abinadab (v. 11) and Ahimaaz (v. 15), were sons-in-law of Solomon, married to his daughters. Thus the report suggests a close network of urban elites who were committed to a common process of accumulation.

3. The payout of forced labor (4:6) and tax arrangements (4:7–19) comes in the report concerning the royal appetite for food:

Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty cors of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl. (1 Kings 4:22–23)

It is remarkable that in the midst of all the grand royal schemes, the narrative pauses over food. The appetite of the regime is broad and deep. Imagine, every day consuming all that meat while the peasants had none! To be sure, the economic base for such a table was not only taxes and cheap labor, but also tribute from foreign lands (protection money) and tariff revenue, all in the interest of accumulation. The outcome is an ostentatious self-exhibit that came to mark every part of the urban confiscation that depended on the produce of the disempowered peasants.

On exhibit is this imagined superpower in its capacity to turn everything and everyone into a collectable commodity in order to capture the imagination of Israel and of the other powers as well, notably the Queen of Sheba (10:1–10). This presentation of Solomon, I believe, does not witness to personal greed. Rather it attests the power of the ideology of accumulation that entranced Israel. What happens in such an arrangement, inevitably, is that the hunger of the peasants, the real food hunger of the disadvantaged, disappears from the screen of policy and of practice.

It cannot be an accident that Ps 72, one of only two psalms related to Solomon, is the great psalm of royal responsibility, linking royal prosperity and longevity to care for the poor. The psalm rubs abrasively up against the Solomon narrative. Perhaps it is an ironic judgment on the king. Perhaps it is a desperate hope. Either way, it is a recognition that an ideology of accumulation of itself is a sure way to guarantee failure. The psalm lines out the positive option. It resolutely implies much that is profoundly negative.

THE PROPHETIC CRITIQUE OF MONOPOLY

The deep critique of the ideology of accumulation is voiced by the prophetic tradition that sounds with immense emotive force and rigorous theological authority. The prophetic tradition repeatedly takes aim precisely at the ideology of scarcity and anxiety that produced accumulation aimed at monopoly.

1. A somewhat soft form of critique is the narrative of Elisha, who proceeded to solve the food problem of ancient Israel without engagement with or even acknowledgement of the ideology of accumulation.

In the narrative of 2 Kings 4:1–7, Elisha provides the widow mother with

enough oil to pay her creditors and save her son. She is, moreover, dependent upon her village neighbors to help her catch the oil that will save her life and the life of her son. While we readily focus on the “miraculous” in the narrative, we mostly miss its framing as an instance of the food fight between creditors and debtors. The crisis is that her creditors—surely the urban elites—are about to enslave her son for her debt, a practice as old as Pharaoh and as recent as Solomon. Elisha, without pedigree or credential, enacts abundance that defies the ideology of scarcity. In doing so he negates the credit system of the accumulators.

In the narrative of 2 Kings 4:42–44, Elisha again participates in the ongoing food fight by feeding a hundred people, with some food left over. The narrative is terse and without explanation. Elisha clearly performs in a way that is outside of and in contradiction to the accumulation system.

Amos, for example, pronounces a “woe” on those who are “at ease in Zion,” that is, those who are narcotized by self-indulgence, who trust their ideology. The critique is not of their self-indulgence, but of the resultant indifference to social reality.

2. When we move from narrative to poetry, the critique of the accumulation system is much more poignant.

Amos, for example, pronounces a “woe” on those who are “at ease in Zion,” that is, those who are narcotized by self-indulgence, who trust their ideology. He begins with an inventory of self-indulgences among those who have too much time on their hands:

Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;
who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
and like David improvise on instruments of music;
who drink wine from bowls
and anoint themselves with the finest oils. (Amos 6:4–6)

Then the poem turns on the conjunction “but” in verse six: “*But* [who] are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!”

The critique is not of their self-indulgence, but of the resultant indifference to social reality. The social crisis that Amos sees (that those he indicts do not see) is that “Joseph” (=Israel) is a failed community. The poet knows, as every prophetic poet knows, that the practitioners of self-indulgence at the expense of others are characteristically the last to notice that what they regard as a blessing is in fact a deep pathology that will in the end destroy what they most value.

The payout of the oracle is the “therefore” of verse 7: “*Therefore* they shall be the first to go into exile, and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.” The ones

most secure will be the most threatened. And the accumulation of excessive goods will offer no protection from the incursions of history that sound here as divine judgment.

In 8:4–8, Amos addresses those whose wealth is linked to dishonest exploitation of the poor. He does not here mention tax or credit arrangements, only the use of dishonest weights in commerce. But the outcome, he says, is the same. The land will “tremble,” likely at the pounding of the invading Assyrian army. It is not incidental that the poetic unit ends with reference to the rise and fall of the Nile River. While the reference is to the reliability of the river, the evocation of Egypt is a reminder in Israel that nobody, not even the land of Egypt, escapes the reality of God’s governance. This God is not finally mocked by the monopoly of the market as wealth is transferred from the poor and needy by commercial means.

3. Isaiah 3 offers a long poem about the opposition of YHWH to a culture of accumulation. The poem anticipates the loss in Jerusalem of all the commodity finery so valued in the city. In the poetry, the God of covenant stands in opposition to commodity accumulation. In order to accent the point, moreover, the prophet delights to detail the accumulation of goods that will be lost:

In that day the LORD will *take away* the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the signet rings and nose rings; the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils. (Isa 3:18–23)

The inventory alludes to the exhibitionism of the “Easter parade” in Jerusalem:

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty
and walk with outstretched necks,
glancing wantonly with their eyes,
mincing along as they go,
tinkling with their feet. (3:16)

All of that will be lost, because the God of covenant will undo the accumulation system. The prophet knows (as does the foundational covenantal tradition) that such commodity accumulation depends finally upon social exploitation. The indictment concerns the abuse of the vulnerable poor:

It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing my people,
by grinding the face of the poor?
says the LORD GOD of hosts. (3:14–15)

The “poor” constitute that segment of the population that is turned, through exploitation, into a dispensable commodity. But that food system, says the poet, has no future.

4. In his emotive critique of Jerusalem in its self-indulgent infidelity, Ezekiel likens the holy city (and its self-indulgent population) to ancient Sodom. He con-

trasts Jerusalem to Sodom, finding Jerusalem even worse (Ezek 16:48). The affront of Sodom, says he, was self-indulgence (16:49–50). For that, Sodom was destroyed. What interests us here is that in the horizon of Ezekiel, the defining sin of Sodom (and by inference of Jerusalem), is pride expressed as “excess of food” that precluded care of the “poor and needy” (v. 49). The startling language that links the holy city to Sodom makes this an especially poignant judgment. Arrogant autonomy, expressed as excessive consumption, generated indifference to the poor and needy. Such indifference, which makes perfect sense in the ideology of accumulation, is unbearable in the world that YHWH governs. The oracle ends with severity: “You must bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations” (v. 58).

It is impossible to appreciate the cumulative effect of prophetic poetry unless we see that it joins issue with an ideology that is, in their judgment, in deep contradiction to the true character of Israel and certainly to the true intent of YHWH, who presides over Israel and over the food supply of the world.

THE ROLE OF BABYLON

At the beginning of the narrative of Israel there is Pharaoh who needs more bricks. In Jerusalem there is Solomon who eats too well. And now, at the other end of the Old Testament, is Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, who destroyed Jerusalem. Indeed, the prophets say that he did so at the behest of YHWH. Like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar became a metaphor and a cipher for all monopolizers.

The poem uses the word “eat” four times. Talk about a food fight! That is what superpowers do, in their appetite for control, to vulnerable subject states.

1. Jeremiah anticipates Nebuchadnezzar’s coming army, even though, in the poetry, he does not specifically name him. The poet imagines the coming of the army of Nebuchadnezzar that will be strong and strange and huge and powerful, sweeping all before it. The great devourer is sent by YHWH against YHWH’s own city (Jer 5:15–16). And then the poet describes what this army, like every invading army, will do to the land:

They shall eat up your harvest and your food;
 they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;
 they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;
 they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;
 they shall destroy with the sword
 your fortified cities in which you trust. (v. 17)

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2. It is no wonder that Isaiah chides Babylon for acting as if it were autonomous (Isa 47:7, 8, 10). When a superpower imagines that it is autonomous and not accountable, then it can eat all the food, take all the resources, gobble up all the treasures, exhaust all the reserves, and never answer. It belongs to the strong in the food fight, says Jeremiah, to “have no mercy” (Jer 6:23). When food is managed without mercy, abuse, suffering, and slavery are sure to eventuate. All such indulgence, however, is short-term, because God finally will not be mocked. This lesson is offered to the perpetrators of the food fight, over and over. Those in the monopoly seem to learn too late.

THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS

Eventually our study of food must come to Jesus. It is clear that Jesus violated the rules of the food system by eating with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:16).² He violated the rules of eating that are, of course, the rules of power. Jesus violates the rules and thereby presents himself as an enemy of those rules and those power arrangements. Consider the reports in Luke, the most socially revolutionary of the Gospels.

1. It is no wonder that in the Magnificat, the song of Mary that is the theme song of Luke, Mary sang of food: “He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:53). Mary anticipates that the narrative to follow in Luke will be witness to a food revolution whereby the old rules of food are overthrown so that all may share.

2. In Luke 14, Jesus teaches his host at dinner: “When you serve a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind” (vv. 12–14). Jesus redefines the social process of eating in an inclusive way. Then he tells his parable of the great banquet. When the honored guests are too busy to attend, the master of the table wants the household filled with those who are on the “roads and lanes,” that is, the street people not usually qualified for such a bountiful table.

3. In Luke 12, Jesus tells a parable about a rich man who prospered in agriculture. He frames the story as a warning about greed. The prosperous man wants to store more and more, but his food production is so abundant, he has no place to store it. So, he says, “I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods” (Luke 12:18). And then he says, to himself, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry” (v. 19).

This is a man who has made it in the food world. He builds bigger barns, bigger silos, bigger granaries, and bigger vaults, just as Pharaoh and Solomon built

²See John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 140. On the violation of food rules, see the difficult but rewarding discussion of Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981).

their storage cities. They are all of a piece, those who secure a disproportionate share of the world's food supply.

In the parable, in the middle of his self-congratulations: "But God said to him" (v. 20). The interruption of such self-congratulations sounds like the word of YHWH to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Food monopolizers are, sooner or later, interrupted by this inscrutable master of all food.

If that were not enough, Jesus turns the parable of Luke 12 into an instruction for his disciples. He says to them, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear" (v. 22). Do not participate in the anxiety system that is grounded in a mistaken notion of scarcity. Do not be anxious, because your heavenly father, the Food Manager, knows what you need. Then Jesus, master teacher, observes birds and lilies that are not anxious, because they trust the creator who gives them their food supply. And then, after birds and lilies, we get this zinger that is so familiar that we do not notice that it is a zinger: "Yet I tell you, even *Solomon* in all his glory was not clothed like one of these" (v. 27). Not even Solomon! Not even the great accumulator! Not even Pharaoh! Not even Nebuchadnezzar! Not any of the accumulators can get outside the anxiety that is intrinsic to the scarcity system.

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So, in review, the crisis of scarcity, anxiety, accumulation, and monopoly

- touches food production and asks about the abuse of the land;
- touches food consumption and asks about commoditization;
- touches food distribution and the redistribution of food at the creator's behest;
- touches the environment that overproduces in order to add to the monopoly.

It makes one wonder if the monopolizers had any capacity for an internal life, what they did about their hunger for meaning, whether they noticed the neighbor when they gathered at the table. It keeps ringing in our ears, "Not even Solomon in all his glory"—in all his self-indulgence.

The biblical text traces the career of the monopolizers, but it does more than that. It attests that there is another way to consider food. When our granaries and our bodies store surpluses, our bodies and the body politic suffer. It can be otherwise; we can meet at the table in another way. We can watch and notice while food is taken, blessed, broken, and given. And there is always more than enough, some-

times twelve baskets, sometimes seven baskets; it is shared and ample. No need to accumulate!

PART II: COMMUNITY—ABUNDANT FOOD PRACTICE AS ASTONISHED GRATITUDE

There is another way, an alternative to the ideology of scarcity, anxiety, accumulation, and monopoly that I describe in the first part of this essay. This other way invites a move

- from scarcity to abundance;
- from anxiety to trust;
- from accumulation to sharing;
- from monopoly to covenantal neighborliness.

This other way is based theologically in an explanatory narrative that centers in the reality of a God who is not parsimonious. This conviction runs through the Bible. It does not, however, do so easily, because the ideology of scarcity and anxiety also occupies the Bible and takes up a lot of text time. Thus it seems plausible to say that the Bible itself exhibits the food fight and is congruent with the way the food fight exists among us, and exists, for each of us, in our own persons.³

SEEING THE WORLD AS GOD'S

The “other way” in the food fight is grounded in creation faith, in the conviction that the world is God’s creation that is designed to exhibit and enact God’s good will for the abundant life.

The great creation text in Gen 1 claims that the world is deeply linked to God’s will and purpose. For this reason, the world is not a closed system that operates on its own, leaving us with a zero-sum game; it is rather a process open to the continued gifts of the creator. However, the world is not itself sacred so that it possesses of itself the gift of life. Rather, the creation is God’s partner, God’s object, God’s vehicle for wellness in the world that God continues to enact in the continuing work of creation.⁴ The Genesis recital tells of the ordered goodness of the world that moves progressively from day to day to day until it arrives at “very good” (v. 31). That ordered goodness, moreover, is sustained and reliable even in the face of the deep threat of chaos. Thus, at the conclusion of the flood narrative, after the power of chaos has done its worst, God declares, “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (8:22). The full, regular functioning of the creation is assured by divine decree!

³Martha Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), has made a compelling case that the “clash” between such views is not between people on different sides; it is, rather, a “clash” within each of us that is variously negotiated and resolved.

⁴See Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 137–161.

The recital has two features that concern us here. First, the world is blessed by God. God had committed God's own life-giving force into the wonder of the world. Second, as a consequence of that divine blessing, the world will be fruitful, will keep generating food to sustain all of life: "And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth'" (Gen 1:22).

That life-giving force, moreover, has been entrusted to human care and supervision (vv. 29–30). The relationship of creator and creature is one of committed trust and responding obedience. The world is articulated in personal and interpersonal categories. The proper interaction between God and world, creator and creature, is dialogical; it features trust, generosity, gratitude, and obedience. Such a way in the world, albeit given in prescientific terms, refuses the flat, reductionist language of commodity and control to which market ideology is always tempted. Thus the Bible can imagine that all creatures—human creatures as well as birds, beasts, and fish—are in conversation with the creator.

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Specifically, that conversation, as concerns human persons, is in the form of prayer. The most pertinent prayer for the food fight is the simple, regular table prayer that voices thanks to God for food, acknowledging that food is a gift from God and not a human product or possession. That prayer, practiced on every occasion of receiving food, is one of gratitude that contradicts the self-sufficiency of the accumulators. In the Old Testament, the two most treasured table prayers are situated in psalms of creation. Psalm 145 acknowledges God's "wondrous works" of generosity that outrun human expectation (vv. 4–7). The psalm identifies, in stylized terms, the covenantal fidelity of God as "gracious and merciful" (vv. 8–9) and invites all creatures to give thanks: "All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you" (v. 10). Then, in verses 15–16, comes what has long been used as a table prayer:

The eyes of all look to you,
 And you give them their food in due season.
 You open your hand,
 satisfying the desire of every living thing. (vv. 15–16)

The prayer affirms that God feeds "every living creature"; there is a correlation between "desire" and the timely generosity of God the creator who responds to every hunger. The prayer is defiant refusal of autonomy and self-sufficiency.

The second such prayer is in Ps 104, a psalm that moves from the large framing of creation as "heaven, earth, and the waters" (vv. 2–9) to the specificities of daily life:

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart. (vv. 14–15)

The psalm names grapes (wine), olives (oil), and grain (bread)—the three great money crops in the ancient world (see Deut 7:13; 14:23; Neh 13:5; Isa 36:17; Hos 2:8; Joel 2:19). But these money crops that are raised by peasants (and often exploited by the accumulators) are also the sacramental tokens of the church—water for baptism, bread and wine for the Eucharist, and oil for anointing. These sacramental claims of the church take the core stuff of creation’s fullness as signs of the goodness and presence of God in the world.

While God is celebrated in large scope and then in regular provision, Ps 104 comes down to the case of daily food:

These [“creeping things innumerable” in v. 25] all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
when you give it to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are filled with good things. (vv. 27–28)

God’s open hand feeds “all” who finally rely upon the creator. The creatures look to the generous creator in astonishment, awe, wonder, and gratitude that the Genesis creator would mobilize such a food-producing energy for such vulnerable cases as carrots and whales, possums and “us.” The prayer affirms, “These all look to you,” an expectant, trustful look; the language is paralleled in Ps 145:15, “The eyes of all look to you.” The grateful look is one of glad dependence and gladness that God will provide.

ABUNDANCE AND GENEROSITY

The “other way” (other than accumulation) is rooted in the conviction that the creator God presides over an abundant food supply with generosity toward all creatures. This conviction cannot be stated with scientific precision or with closely reasoned logic, and Israel never tried to do so. The reality of divine abundance given in generosity requires a very different mode of discourse, namely, doxology. Doxology is the glad self-abandoning exuberance of the creature who holds nothing back in affirmation of the creator.⁵ Doxology is a mode of discourse that matches the generosity of the creation. Indeed, Gen 1 itself has the cadences of doxology, the lining out of awe that can never be taken as scientific discourse. The psalms that I have just cited are full, extended doxologies, encompassing all of creation. Psalm 104 celebrates the framing of creation (vv. 1–9), but pivots on the gift of water, especially important in an arid climate:

⁵See Walter Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
 they flow between the hills,
 giving drink to every wild animal;
 the wild asses quench their thirst.
 By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
 they sing among the branches.
 From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
 the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. (vv. 10–13)

The water here is the same water that flows in the four rivers of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:10–14); it is clear that water is what makes a life-giving world possible. The psalm notices the sustenance of all creatures from the water-providing God (wild animals, wild asses, birds, cattle, storks, wild goats, coney, and lions). It is no wonder that the psalmist must finally fall back in exuberance, lacking any other form of adequate speech: “O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (v. 24; see also v. 35).

Doxology is the rhetoric of overflowing in which the words of awe and astonishment tumble out. They are words back to the limitless generosity of God who gives seed and bread.

The secret of creation is pronounced in a double reference to God’s “spirit/breath” on which the world depends (vv. 29–30). The world is not a self-starter. It cannot maintain itself automatically, nor can any of the creatures that inhabit it. Israel’s doxology knows that it is the gift of the wind of God that creates (see Gen 1:2), that renews the face of the ground (Ps 104:30). It is no surprise at all that the psalmist, singing for all those who gladly trust God’s abundance, knows that praise defines human creaturely existence: “I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; surely I will sing praise to my God while I have being” (v. 33).

Doxology is the rhetoric of overflowing in which the words of awe and astonishment tumble out. The words are not to be uttered to an abstract principle or to an empty sky. They are words back to the limitless generosity of God who gives seed and bread (Isa 55:10). The push of doxology beyond human speech is risked in the great creation hymn that situates Job in a vast mystery of God’s governance:

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
 Or who stretched the line upon it?
 On what were its bases sunk,
 or who laid its cornerstone
 when the morning stars sang together
 and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? (Job 38:5–7)

The question is put to Job, and he cannot answer. He cannot answer because the wonder of creation is beyond knowing. All around the divine question there is wonder and awe and astonishment. In the instant of their appearing, as the darkness is broken and the dawn cracks, the stars at dawn broke into singing. They sang in joy

about their existence. They sang in gratitude for the creator who brought the light. They sang because it is in their nature to sing. They exist in order to sing the world back to God. Such doxology is a match to creation as miracle.

THE CENTRALITY OF SABBATH REST

Doxology is awed gratitude. It is response to gifts given from a posture of receptivity. That is why we sing such songs best with our hands outstretched. It is for good reason, then, that the creation liturgy in Gen 1 culminates in Sabbath rest: “On the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done” (Gen 2:3). The world as given by God is not a restless, seething organism of recalcitrance. The world is “very good” as a fruit-bearing process to benefit all creatures. For that reason, at the center of doxology—at the center of biblical faith—is the command to rest. Imagine: God rests! God is not anxious about creation working well. God is not a workaholic. More than that, God’s Sabbath rest allows God to recover God’s *nephesh* (soul or self): “On the seventh day, [God] rested, and was refreshed” (Exod 31:17)—that is, God was “re-*nepheshed*”; even for God, life needs to be restored after depletion.

It is remarkable enough to imagine a depleted God who requires Sabbath. It is equally remarkable to ponder human persons who are depleted and who require recovery and restoration. Thus, Sabbath breaks the grip of feverish work in the world, breaks feverish accumulation. Big-time accumulators, like Pharaoh, never take Sabbath rest. So Pharaoh is more and more depleted, and consequently more and more anxious. It is, in like manner, hard to imagine a conventional American consumer taking a Sabbath break from restless efforts at accumulation performed for the sake of the children or the career or the church or whatever. It is hard to imagine the vicious cycle of anxiety being broken, but such is the wondrous reality of Sabbath rest that is in sync with the rhythm of creation.⁶ Sabbath is possible because God guarantees what is needed to satisfy the desire of every living thing. Sabbath asserts that we are not pressed by scarcity, we are not consumed by anxiety, we are not driven by greed, and we are not available for anxious accumulation.

DEPARTING FROM PHARAOH

The convergence of creation as fruitful food production, response in exuberant doxology that matches God’s abundance, and restful Sabbath to savor that abundance generates a venue for food sharing in gratitude and food eating in astonishment that decisively impacts our food production, food distribution, and food consumption.

In the purview of Israel, Pharaoh, the accumulator, had skewed the entire process:

⁶See Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), and Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time* (New York: Random House, 2010).

- Pharaoh, in his monopoly, has imagined that he, and not the creator, is the one who provides food (see Ezek 29:3);
- Pharaoh, in his scarcity, has reduced the doxologies of Israel to pained laments (see Exod 2:23);
- Pharaoh, in his insatiable appetite, has gotten rid of all Sabbath rest (see Exod 5:4–19).

The annulment of generous creation, the silencing of doxology, and the termination of Sabbath rest has resulted in a process of food production, food distribution, and food consumption that is unsustainable for Israel and for the world.

For that reason, the Exodus narrative, which follows quickly after the slave-enticing narrative of Gen 47, describes the departure of Israel from the food system of Pharaoh. Israel comes to consciousness about its unbearable status in the food monopoly. Israel becomes an agent in its own history rather than merely a recipient of what Pharaoh chooses to dole out. Israel breaks the silence of pain long denied, imagines an alternative existence outside the monopoly of Pharaoh, and dares to go there.

*the contest between God and Pharaoh, between Moses
(and Aaron) and the imperial magicians, is a food fight, a
contest between theories and practices of food*

The Exodus narrative, of course, features Pharaoh, the accumulator, who has skewed creation, and Moses, who is a daring and uncompromising leader. Most of all, though, it spectacularly features the creator God, YHWH, who is the great adversary of Pharaoh, the accumulator. Indeed, YHWH's enigmatic name in Exod 3:14, which we translate something like "I will be who I will be," contains something of the causative sense of the verb—thus, "the one who causes to be," "the one who creates." The contest between God and Pharaoh, between Moses (and Aaron) and the imperial magicians, is a food fight, a contest between theories and practices of food. As the story goes, Israel, through the leadership of Moses and at the behest of YHWH, departs the food monopoly of the accumulator in Exod 15. After pausing to sing and dance (15:1–18, 20–21), they make their way, enroute to a new land, into the wilderness which, in the Bible, is a place without viable life supports or reliable food supplies. There, Israel's exuberance promptly fades. By the second verse of chapter 16, just two verses into the wilderness, they are vexed and contentious; they wish they had never left the regime of the accumulator (Exod 16:2–3).

They thought they were going to die, and so they remembered the "meat pots" (=fleshpots) in the land of the accumulator that now looked better than the hunger of the wilderness. Indeed, in another reading of the same memory, they could recall in some detail the menu that they had enjoyed in Egypt: "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our strength is

dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at” (Num 11:4–6). They did not at the moment remember the burden of their labor, only that they had food. And now, having trusted Moses and having committed to YHWH as an alternative to the accumulator, they were bereft. There is a reason that this story is pre-occupied with the accumulator!

In the narrative that follows, they were surprised—and we are surprised in our reading—that the wilderness turned out to be a place where YHWH could and would give gifts. Thus the creator promises meat in the wilderness, and Israel got quail (Exod 16:12–13). Before long they complained about the lack of water, and they got water (17:3, 5–6). And between the meat and the water, God promised bread: “In the morning you shall have your fill of bread” (16:12).

When the bread came in the morning, it was not like any bread they had ever experienced. They were astonished and bewildered. They said in their surprise, “What is it?” (v. 15). In Hebrew they said, “*man hu*,” that is, “manna.” They wondered about it, and knew it was “wonder bread” sent by God. They were given bread outside Pharaoh’s monopoly.

So now Israel has meat, water, and bread. They saw in that moment that the creator God has the capacity to transform wilderness into creation, to transpose the place of hunger into a venue for abundance.

But the narrative does not move to a big theological claim. It remains with the concreteness of bread for the hungry. Moses authorizes a harvest of the surprising bread: “Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents” (v. 16). Unlike the bread of scarcity in Egypt, now there was enough. The generous creator had given all that everyone needed. God had indeed “satisfied the desire of every living thing,” so that we may find in the narrative an echo of the doxological thanks of the psalm.

There is only one catch. They cannot store it up, build a surplus, or hoard it. In this way the bread is so unlike the bread of the accumulator, for the one thing not to be done now is accumulate (v. 19). But they did not listen to that one qualification. They did try to save it up, because they feared scarcity. They thought like Pharaoh. They were completely inured to the ideology of scarcity and anxiety, and so were propelled to accumulate.

But the gifts of God do not lend themselves to accumulation. And so, we are told, the bread “bred worms and became foul” (v. 20). There is, however, a strange footnote in the narrative. In verse 23, Moses makes a Friday exception to the rule of no storage. He authorizes them to gather more bread on Friday in order to have bread for Sabbath Saturday, when they are not to gather (vv. 23–26).

Even in the wilderness, where they feared scarcity, they are to prepare for Sabbath rest. They are to pause to ponder that creation functions even in the wilderness. The creator is alive and well. The bread holds for today, even as it multiplies enough for tomorrow when it is Sabbath.

This is a remarkable story. It is impossible to overstate its importance for Israel's memory and its significance for our perception of the food fight that offers an alternative to Pharaoh's hungry drive for monopoly. In this remarkable narrative, all of the juices of the Garden have been transferred to and activated in the wilderness. There is no limit to the transformative power of YHWH that contrasts to the impotence of Pharaoh (see Isa 41:17–20).

Pharaoh assumed that the world was a closed system with no new gifts to be given. Israel's doxologies contradict that notion with the lyrical conviction that God has more gifts to give; those gifts are to be given in places where we think it is not possible to have new life.

THE HORIZON OF JESUS

The food fight is not resolved in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the challenge is not Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar; it is the imperial option of Rome and the way in which some Jews, notably the influential priests, colluded with imperial appetites. They did so by "fencing the table" with rules of holiness that carried with them rules of power and access.

It was the vocation of Jesus to exhibit and perform the abundance of God's rule that constituted a stark contrast to the ideology of parsimony that evoked the imperial rules of power and access. In the horizon of Jesus, there was no ground for scarcity, and so no reason for anxiety, no need for accumulation, and no pressure toward monopoly. Almost everything Jesus did in his teaching and in his action challenged those rules and brought him into conflict with the authorities. He is indeed a "transgressor" of the conventional rules of food. In Mark, early on, Jesus is found eating with tax collectors and sinners, because, as he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:16).

Already in Mark 2:1–12, Jesus runs into opposition, for his willingness to heal and his capacity to forgive are acts of unseemly generosity in a theological world governed by parsimony. By his readiness to eat with the "disqualified," Jesus makes clear that the food supply of the creator is not limited to those who keep the rules of holiness and power; in fact, the food supply is sufficient to be distributed indiscriminately. Indeed, his initial entry into the synagogue to begin his public life features a declaration of Jubilee (Luke 4:18–19; quoting from Isa 61). The Jubilee is the most subversive and dangerous teaching in the Bible, for it enacts a different kind of entitlement that pays no heed to conventional rules of distribution and property.⁷

Alongside Jesus' words, his actions push the food fight to greater extremity. Jesus twice performs a "feeding miracle." That is, he offers and exhibits food in wild abundance that is distributed to the hungry crowd without attention to quali-

⁷See Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

fication. In Mark 6:30–44 he is in a “deserted place,” that is, a “wilderness.” He observes the hungry crowd and has “compassion for them” (v. 34). He takes what little food that is available in the crowd and makes available the abundance of God’s new creation. In Jesus, the new creation of God’s abundance has begun and is now made visible in the wilderness. The convergence of “wilderness” and “compassion” makes clear that Jesus is reiterating the manna narrative of Exod 16. He brings food where there is none. His actions consist in taking the five loaves and blessing, breaking, and giving them for distribution.

The narrative does not explain nor does it exhibit any curiosity about how this could happen. It does not invite, require, or even permit explanation. It is enough that Jesus transforms that deserted place into a place of well-being. There was enough for the large, hungry crowd of 5,000 men (plus the accompanying women and children)—with twelve baskets left over.

In Mark 8:1–10, Jesus is again in the “desert.” He again comes to a great crowd without anything to eat. He again has compassion. He again enacts the abundance of the new creation: he takes the loaves, gives thanks, breaks the bread, and gives it to his disciples for distribution.

There was, again, more than enough—this time for a crowd of 4,000, with seven loaves of bread remaining.

This twice-told story breaks the grip of anxious monopoly. Jesus is no accumulator. He relies on the bread that is at hand. He passes it out—all of it. He does so because it is needed for the hungry crowd; he knows and trusts that there will be more as it is needed. It is clear that, when Jesus comes as the agent of the new creation of God, there is no scarcity and thus no anxiety and no accumulation. The narrative shows the way in which the food fight is to be resolved, by embrace of the new creation of abundance that refuses frantic production, that eschews parsimonious distribution, and that allows for consumption that fills but that does not overwhelm.

It is no wonder that this second bread episode is followed by a session of critical reflection. Jesus now focuses on his disciples because something of immense importance has happened among them. They, however, do not any more discern what he has done than do the Pharisees. His disciples are in a boat without bread. Well, there is “one loaf,” a notation that some think refers to Jesus himself in the boat as the bread of life. Jesus warns his disciples about the junk food of those who make the rules of access: “Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod” (Mark 8:15). Then Jesus asks them to reflect on what he has done in supplying abundant food. He asks them for discernment of which they are in fact not capable: “Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember?” (vv. 17–18).

They do not get it; they do not respond to his questions, and they likely avoided eye contact with him. They do not understand that the terrain of the food fight has, by his presence and his action, decisively shifted. They are completely oblivious.

Like any good teacher, Jesus retreats from such large and challenging questions back to a concrete operational question: “When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets of broken pieces did you collect?” (v. 19). They answer confidently: “Twelve.” Jesus continues, “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” (v. 20). The answer, promptly: “Seven.” There is a long pause. The disciples are relieved that they have survived the quiz. But Jesus sees what he has on his hands. He has eager disciples who are good at concrete operational data. They know the statistics. But they have no idea what they have witnessed. They completely miss the point that a new reality about food and hunger is now before them. And so, upon reflection, he says to his disciples: “Do you not yet understand?” (v. 21).

The old categories of the food fight are now irrelevant. The old patterns of Pharaoh are obsolete. The new creation is a gift that keeps on giving, and there is no excuse now for parsimony toward the neighbor.

He says this, perhaps whimsically, surely with disappointment, or maybe a tone of rebuke. But this is how it is among us characteristically, as followers of Jesus. The new disclosure is too radical and revolutionary, and we cannot take it in. Because what is exhibited is the fact that the old categories of the food fight are now irrelevant. The old patterns of Pharaoh are obsolete, because that old pattern cannot engage in generous sharing. The new creation is a gift that keeps on giving, and there is no excuse now for parsimony toward the neighbor.

Mark offers only a hint of the reason for the obtuseness of the disciples, a hint that explains everything: “They did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (Mark 6:52). Anyone can recognize that the phrase “hearts were hardened” is an allusion back to the Exodus narrative and the condition of Pharaoh (see Exod 7:22; 8:19; 9:35). In that ancient narrative, Pharaoh refused to release the slaves because he had a hard heart. His hard heart made him anxious. Consequently, he needed more granaries for more accumulation that in turn required slave labor. His hard heart caused him to misunderstand the emancipatory reality of God in the narrative.

And now the disciples are like Pharaoh. Indeed, they think like Pharaoh and are, like him, enthralled by notions of scarcity. What an amazing summary of our problem! The disciples missed the reality of God’s abundant bread enacted by Jesus because they perceived reality in the categories of Pharaoh. And all of us, give or take a little, are similarly propelled by nightmares of scarcity that are blind and resistant to the truth of divine generosity that pervades creation.

In fact the food fight is over. That is the news of the evangelists. But we keep reenacting and reiterating our ancient and abiding loyalty to the mistaken categories of Pharaoh. We order our lives and our communities and we build our policies

of food and money and credit and war and supplies on the basis of scarcity. And we do so even when we have seen otherwise!

FOOD FIGHT NO MORE

The news of an alternative gives us a new way to participate in the food fight. The news is of a new creation, jump-started by Jesus, which keeps on giving in ways that make parsimony obsolete. The church's dramatic enactment of and testimony to that new settlement of the food fight is the Eucharist, in which we reiterate the four great verbs of Jesus in the wilderness, "Take, bless, break, give." This "thank-meal" is an act of defiance, a refusal of Pharaoh's system of accumulation, a resolve to live

- from abundance and not scarcity
- in trust and not in anxiety
- by sharing and not accumulating
- for neighborly covenant and not monopoly.

We are left with the question whether, in a world of fearful parsimony and violent struggle to corner the market on food, the abundance is true and reliable, but we have already signed on for it. The truth of abundance follows from Easter, in which the power of death has been exposed as a fraud. Our task is to connect the dots between our big affirmation, "Christ is risen; he is risen indeed," to policies and practices of food production, food distribution, and food consumption.

The claim has immediate implications for how we eat, how much we eat, and with whom we eat. It has long-term implications for policy, because a bloated military budget is based on a fetish of accumulation. The people who are grounded in the generous abundance of God's new creation are the ones who will, perhaps in time, dismantle the entire system of greed that feeds hostility and requires us to live on Orange Alert. Were we not the great accumulators, we likely would not attract the envy and hostility of others in the food fight. It is our conviction that the new creation is reliable and will feed us till we want no more. Jesus broke down abundance to its most elemental components: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink....I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink" (Matt 25:35, 42).

The great news is that we no longer need to be on the hopeless, losing side in the food fight! ☩

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