

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

FOOD AND FAITH

This book provides a comprehensive theological framework for assessing the significance of eating, employing a Trinitarian theological lens to evaluate food production and consumption practices as they are being worked out in today's industrial food systems. Norman Wirzba combines the tools of ecological, agrarian, cultural, biblical, and theological analyses to draw a picture of eating that cares for creatures and that honors God. Unlike books that focus on vegetarianism or food distribution as the key theological matters, this book broadens the scope to include discussions on the sacramental character of eating, eating's ecological and social contexts, the meaning of death and sacrifice as they relate to eating, the Eucharist as the place of inspiration and orientation, the importance of saying grace, and whether or not there will be eating in heaven. *Food and Faith* demonstrates that eating is of profound economic, moral, and theological significance.

Norman Wirzba is Research Professor of Theology, Ecology, and Rural Life at Duke Divinity School. He is the author or editor of numerous essays and books, including *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* and *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Food and Faith

A Theology of Eating

NORMAN WIRZBA

Duke Divinity School



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating
 Norman Wirzba
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521146241

© Norman Wirzba 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Wirzba, Norman.

Food and faith : a theology of eating / Norman Wirzba.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19550-8 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-14624-1 (paperback)

1. Dinners and dining – Religious aspects – Christianity.
2. Food – Religious aspects – Christianity.
3. Food habits.
- I. Title.

BR115.N87W57 2011

261–dc22 2010050332

ISBN 978-0-521-19550-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-14624-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs
 for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not
 guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Ingrid and Alex Wirzba



Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating
Norman Wirzba
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating
Norman Wirzba
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Foreword by Stanley Hauerwas</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<i>Preface</i>	xi
1. Thinking Theologically about Food	1
2. The “Roots” of Eating: Our Life Together in Gardens	35
3. Eating in Exile: Dysfunction in the World of Food	71
4. Life through Death: Sacrificial Eating	110
5. Eucharistic Table Manners: Eating toward Communion	144
6. Saying Grace	179
7. Eating in Heaven? Consummating Communion	211
<i>Author Index</i>	235
<i>Subject Index</i>	239
<i>Scripture Citation Index</i>	242

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating
Norman Wirzba
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Foreword

I must confess, I did not want to know much of what I learned by reading this book. Indeed I found it somewhat painful. In these pages, Norman Wirzba writes about what seems to be our unrelenting desire to degrade God's good creation. But Wirzba is a gentle soul and he has written a beautiful book. That is no small achievement because much of what he has to describe is incessantly ugly. Yet Wirzba has found a way to help us see that by the grace of God we can still learn to live lives of gratitude.

The painfulness I found in reading this book resides in my desire to remain ignorant. I do not want to know how my everyday eating habits make me complicit with cruel treatment of animals. I do not want to know that the way I have learned to eat contributes to the ongoing degradation of the land. I do not want to know how the way my food is produced puts an unjust burden on people who often have no food to eat at all. In truth, I vaguely "knew" about these realities, but Wirzba knows how to bring them to my attention in a manner that demands I must acknowledge them. Acknowledgment can be excruciating.

Do not be fooled by the admirable modesty that pervades Wirzba's prose. This is a book of great philosophical and theological depth, but its strength has largely to do with Wirzba's "method," which does not call attention to itself. By directing our attention to one of the most common aspects of our lives, that is, eating, Wirzba makes us recognize the fundamental character of our lives.

Put simply, he reminds us that we eat to stay alive but we must kill if we are to eat. So "eating is the daily reminder of creaturely mortality." Again, I may have "known" that before reading *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, but Wirzba has now forced me to recognize that the lives we live require the death of creaturely life. For that is what we are – creatures bound together. To understand this forces the recognition that we live through sacrifice.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

That Wirzba has forced me to know what I did not want to know, I attribute to how he has shown that the ontological commitments that are constituted by our eating require theological display. In the past when asked by a skeptic, “Why should I be moral?” I have replied, “Do you like to eat?” My response was meant to challenge my interlocutor’s question by confronting the assumption that “morality” is clearly to be distinguished from the most basic aspects of our lives. I did not realize, however, until I read Wirzba, that my reply was also one that might make sense in response to the question “Why should I believe in God?”

Too often, attempts to bring a theological perspective to issues involving “the environmental crisis” force “God” to fill in a gap. The “gap” may not be Newton’s but the results are often similar to Newton’s attempt to rescue some role for God once physics had done its job. Wirzba has avoided that trap by helping us see that our theological convictions are not “explanations” but rather constitutive of the conditions that make life possible. Put concretely, Wirzba helps us see that if we are to talk of God we better know how to talk about dirt.

Not only must we know how to talk about dirt, but we must recognize that we live through sacrifice. The meal we call Eucharist rightly, therefore, becomes the center of Wirzba’s book. For it is by partaking of this meal, made possible by Christ’s death and resurrection, that we can imagine what it might mean to be reconciled with our mortality. And so reconciled we have some hope of being in communion with the gifts we call creation.

I am confident that anyone reading this remarkably learned book will be grateful for Wirzba’s labor. For here Wirzba demonstrates the palpable connection between how we eat and our worship of the triune God.

Stanley Hauerwas
Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Theological Ethics
Duke Divinity School

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating
Norman Wirzba
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

Several years ago on a warm fall evening at Anathoth Community Garden in Cedar Grove, North Carolina, I enjoyed a memorable meal. Roughly 100 people had gathered for a community feast. Though some of the meal was prepared by cooks from Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, the rest was potluck, and so included some of the freshest and best-tasting greens, tortillas, salsa, and chicken I have ever had. As our backdrop we enjoyed a double rainbow on a massive thundercloud to the east, while the sun slowly made its way down the horizon behind us. Children were running around blowing and catching bubbles. Others danced to the sound of a live bluegrass band. The taste of delectable food, the sounds of laughter and singing, the aroma of fresh flowers and harvest, the hugs of friends and neighbors, and the sensation of a cooling fall night all came together in what I considered a foretaste of heaven.

Why should I or anyone else think that this meal mattered? Is the invocation of heaven not overdrawn? After all, the evening has passed, and the physical sensations are no longer effective in me. No matter how much or how finely I eat, I, along with all the other animal and plant bodies, will still die, and so return to the soil out of which we came and upon which we daily feed. But what if that night and the communion it enacted is indeed a glimpse, however imperfect, of what life ultimately is meant to be?

In this book I develop a theological account of eating, a framework for assessing eating's immediate and ultimate significance. Though it is possible to describe food and eating in countless ways, from a Christian point of view what food is and why eating matters are best understood in terms of God's own Trinitarian life of gift and sacrifice, hospitality and communion, care and celebration. Trinitarian theology asserts that all reality is communion – the giving and receiving of gifts – because it has its source and sustenance in the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

eternal Triune love described by theologians as *perichoresis*, a making room within oneself for another to be. This means that nothing in creation exists by itself, in terms of itself, or for itself. Creatures are marked from beginning to end by the need to receive the gifts of nurture. Inspired by Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have the opportunity to turn our homes into places of hospitality and ourselves into nurture for others. At its best, eating is a sharing and welcoming movement that makes room for others.

According to this theological view, we don't really understand food until we perceive, receive, and taste it in terms of its origin and end in God as the one who provides for, communes with, and ultimately reconciles creation. Created life is God's love made tastable and given for the good of another. The mundane act of eating is thus a daily invitation to move responsibly and gratefully within this given life. It is a summons to commune with the divine Life that is presupposed and made manifest in every bite.

This claim will be difficult to swallow for people who are convinced that food consists of little more than a bundle of nutrients that we simply need to get in the right quantities, variety, and proportion. According to this view, food is primarily a fuel we need to keep our machine-like bodies running at an optimal level. Though some food may taste better than other food, there is little about it that should give us pause for wonder or reverence. Though people in the past may have stopped to say grace before eating a meal, today's educated eater is taught that food is simply a manufactured product that we control.

This is an impoverished description of food. While it is certainly true that we can speak of bread as a collection of material elements (water, salt, yeast, flour), reducing food to this level is like opening a letter and judging it to be nothing more than a page covered with random markings. Rather than reading the marks "I LOVE YOU!" to communicate a life-altering pronouncement inviting a response, all one sees are characters on a page worthy of little more than a passing notice.

Similarly, we can look at a meal and see only a random assortment of nutrients, oblivious to the grace of God made manifest in it. We can forget that food is one of God's basic and abiding means for expressing divine provision and care. To partake of a meal is to participate in a divine communication. The Psalmist (104:10–15) puts it this way:

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
giving drink to every wild animal ...
You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xiii

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.¹

To grow food and eat in a way that is mindful of God is to collaborate with God's own primordial sharing of life in the sharing of food with each other. It is to participate in forms of life and frameworks of meaning that have their root and orientation in God's caring ways with creation.

It takes education, a catechesis within particular communities and traditions, to enable a person to see that the marks on a page are actually words that, if one has the requisite intelligence, sympathy, and imagination, can convey a wide range of meanings. Sometimes these meanings are shallow or of merely temporary interest. But other times they are profound and personally transformative. Knowing the difference is part of what it means to be a good reader. Though one may learn to read, the possibility always exists that one will be indolent, inattentive, or indifferent; the reader sees the words but has not really digested them.

In a similar manner, eaters can consume a wide variety of foods and not really savor any of it as God's love made nurture for us. To eat with theological appreciation presupposes reverence for creation as the work of God's hands. It entails spiritual formation in which we allow God the Gardener (Genesis 2:8) to conform us to his image as the one who looks after and provides for creatures. In this work we learn where and who we are by becoming tillers and keepers of God's edible garden (Genesis 2:15). Without this ongoing catechesis we run the risk of reducing the gift of food and the grace of eating to a desecration. We risk undermining the ecological and cultural conditions necessary for healthy and convivial life together.

In advanced industrial societies, where speed, convenience, and cheap prices have become the most valued characteristics in food consumption, it is hardly surprising that eating has become thoughtless and irresponsible. Though everyone chews, relatively few eat with much understanding of or sympathy for the widespread destruction of the world's agricultural lands and communities or the misery of billions of factory-produced chickens, sheep, pigs, and cattle. Today's handling of food does not often go much beyond concerns for its appearance, availability, and price. In our global economy food is a commodity much like any other, serving the business need for profit, the consumer desire for cheapness, and the political quest for power. In this

¹ All references to scripture are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

PREFACE

context, food ceases to speak as the grace of God. Eating ceases to be the occasion through which we experience life as a membership of belonging, responsibility, and gratitude.

Can a theology of eating be of help? My hope is that the theological account I give in this book will enable us to see and taste food in fresh ways, and that this theological vision will inform the ways we grow and share food. The Psalmist invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). The goodness of creation, its delectability, but also God’s delight in its beauty, cannot really dawn on us so long as we reduce food to a product of our own hands or turn it into a commodity for purposes of power and profit. Food is a gift of God given to all creatures for the purposes of life’s nurture, sharing, and celebration. When it is done in the name of God, eating is the earthly realization of God’s eternal communion-building love.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

In calling this book a theology of eating two things need to be kept in mind. First, this is *a* theology of eating rather than *the* theology of eating. As an exercise in constructive theology, it has become abundantly clear to me that what I am doing is offering a theological “picture” that represents a particular Christian view. It is not the only picture that can be drawn. Given the depth and mystery that eating is, other Christians, as well as those who represent different faith traditions, will see and taste food differently. I develop theological themes like the garden, sin, sacrifice, Eucharist, reconciliation, and communion so that the scope and significance of creaturely membership can be more readily understood. My development of these themes is hardly exhaustive. I invite others to draw them out differently and in ways that widen our appreciation of eating and food.

In describing what I do here as the development of a theological picture, I am also aware that my focus has been more on the picture’s coherence than the development of extended arguments with those who might object to the picture as a whole or to some of its parts. Detailed arguments can be, and in some cases are, given for the brush strokes I make. But to have argued for every point would have made for a very big and, in some instances, very specialized book. Using the philosopher Charles Taylor’s language, what I am doing is drawing the contours of a theological “imaginary” of eating that aims to be illuminating and compelling.² My hope is that the picture I draw will be

² An imaginary is more than a set of ideas. It refers to the mental and affective framework that inspires and enables us to make sense of practices, institutional forms, and personal forms

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xv

both an accurate depiction of realities realized in today's food economies and a faithful rendering of eating as it is meant to be in the kingdom of God.

Given this aim, it is not essential that readers read the chapters in the order I have placed them. A picture, by definition, has multiple points of entry. Some may want to start with the last chapter on the possibility of heavenly eating so as to consider eating's ultimate purpose and context. Others may want to turn directly to the chapter on the Eucharist so as to gain a sense for the overarching practical thrust of this book. Though I have ordered chapters in a way that starts with general themes (the nature of today's food systems and the ways we think about them; the ecological and educational contexts of food production and eating; and the distortions of food systems and eating practices), then moves in a more sustained way into theological themes (like death and sacrifice; the significance of the Eucharist and the work of reconciliation; the meaning of thanksgiving and self-offering; and the hope of heaven), readers, particularly those well acquainted with today's food systems, may choose to start with the second half.

Second, this is a work of *theology*. It is not an explicit or developed "ethics of eating." This is not to say that ethical issues or practical concerns are absent from this work.³ Indeed, the welfare of habitats and animals, farmers and food workers is never far from my mind. What I have not done, however, is provide detailed analyses of the research being done by scientists (in nutrition, chemistry, biology, and ecology), social scientists (in anthropology, sociology, politics, gender studies, history, and economics), and artists and philosophers that is the prerequisite for a formal ethics of eating. As important as these topics are, I do not focus on genetic engineering and the patenting of foods, or on the justice of regional and global trade agreements, though I do hope that what I say in a theological mode sheds some light on these topics.

The topic of vegetarianism, though also much in my mind (and in the minds of a growing number of people), does not receive developed treatment in this book. The main reason for this is that detailed work has been and is being done on this topic by theologians like Stephen Webb, David Grumett, Rachel

of life. It informs common expectations and understandings of how the world *is* and what it *ought to be*. See Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

³ There is vigorous debate in theology and philosophy on the relation between theory and practice. See the collections *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002) and *Transforming Philosophy and Religion: Love's Wisdom*, ed. Norman Wirzba and Bruce Ellis Benson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) for an indication of the diverse ways in which thinking is transformed by lived practices.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Muers, and Michael Northcott.⁴ For readers interested in pursuing the complexities of this debate, abundant resources are already on hand. This book serves as a contribution to the debate by drawing a wider theological context in which questions about death, sacrifice, self-offering, and gratitude – all topics vitally related to a consideration of vegetarianism – are developed.

Turning to the book itself, Chapter 1 explores why eating is a moral and theological issue. It examines how our thinking about food has been rendered shallow by the modern narration and reduction of it to a commodity. My focus is on both the de-contextualization of food, by which I mean a society's disassociation of food from ecological and productive contexts, and the industrialization of eating, by which I mean the intervention of market and machine logics into the eating act. These developments, I argue, lead to a spiritually impoverished understanding of food that can be corrected once we begin to think of eating as a "spiritual exercise."

Chapter 2 develops the ecological and creaturely context for eating by describing humanity's identity and vocation in a garden. I argue that gardens are indispensable for the flourishing of terrestrial life because gardens and the geo-bio-chemical processes they embody are the places where life's many hungers are met. Eating, both figuratively and literally, has its roots in the soil. Gardens are the practical sites in terms of which people begin to see, smell, hear, touch, and taste the breadth and depth of human membership and responsibility. I describe a gardener's education and how it potentially leads to the development of affections and forms of attention that make possible a spiritually deep appreciation of food. But food is not the only important garden crop. The cultivation of people with special sensitivities is an equally important harvest. I conclude this chapter by showing how human gardening at its best is inspired and shaped by an understanding of God and Christ as the prototypical gardeners who nurture and care for the world.

Chapter 3 describes the malfunction of eating as it is realized and worked out in our natural habitats, our economies, and our bodies. Using the metaphor of exile, I here describe "sinful" eating as "the anxiety of membership," as the refusal to welcome and accept responsibility for the memberships of creation of which we are a part. To eat is to enter intimately into the lives of

⁴ See Stephen Webb's *Good Eating* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001) and David Grumett and Rachel Muers' *Theology on the Menu: Asceticism, Meat and Christian Diet* (London: Routledge, 2010) and their co-edited work *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2008). The last is a particularly impressive collection that encompasses biblical, historical, philosophical, and theological perspectives. For a Jewish consideration, see Richard Schwartz's *Judaism and Vegetarianism* (New York: Lantern Books, 2001).

others. It is to participate in the growth of life, but also its death. This chapter describes how eating disorders of varying kinds develop because people are unable or unwilling to accept responsibility for this costly participation that is worked out on ecological, economic, and physiological levels. Here we discuss issues like the degradation of ecosystems and agricultural lands, the injustice and destructiveness of international trade agreements and consumer economics, the ill health of today's marketing and eating practices, and the danger of eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia.

Chapter 4 considers the very costly nature of creaturely life. For anything to eat, others must die, most often by being eaten themselves. Death is eating's steadfast accomplice. It is not simply the end of life, but life's precondition. This chapter examines how this death is to be understood. I argue that death is best understood not as the cessation of an individual's functioning but as the cessation of membership. I then consider how a sacrificial sensibility can be brought to bear on this topic, arguing that sacrifice is frequently misunderstood to be a violent act done to appease a bloodthirsty God. Turning to the story of Noah, I develop an account of sacrifice that instead highlights the renewal of life through self-offering and service. I further consider how the Eucharist, itself often understood as a sacrifice, can be interpreted to shed light on this particular issue. I end the chapter by showing how a sacrificial sensibility can inform our thinking about vegetarianism and the twin practices of feasting and fasting.

Chapter 5 gives an interpretation of the Christian Eucharist as the key to an understanding of the communion of life. Eucharistic eating heals sinfulness because it restores the memberships that make up every eating community. I develop the view that the Eucharist constitutes a communal way of being that participates in and images God's own Trinitarian life. When we consume Jesus as the "bread of life" (John 6), a transformation of eating occurs because people are here brought into his life and his way of being in the world. The work of Christ, in other words, is not so much about the salvation of individual souls but about leading people into true, abundant, eternal, resurrection life. Sinful eating degrades and destroys life. Eucharistic eating honors and promotes life. It creates a culture of service, hospitality, and communality that is of paramount importance as we critique today's food economies and work to create a healthier food culture.

Chapter 6 argues that a deep appreciation of eating as a participation in the memberships of life and death should end in gratitude and celebration. In particular, I consider the deep spiritual and practical significance of "saying grace." In my account I first consider why our eating culture is so permeated by ingratitude, and then develop what gratitude means and how it is

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xviii

PREFACE

best expressed. I argue that saying grace is in fact a profoundly political act because to give thanks for food presupposes that one has committed one's own life to the re-membering or healing of the memberships that have been dis-membered by today's food systems. I conclude by showing that saying grace finds its completion in our offering ourselves and the world to God.

Will there be eating in heaven, particularly if we recall that eating presupposes so much death? Chapter 7 addresses this question by first considering what we mean when we think of heaven. Far from being an escape from this world, and thus a release from membership with each other, heaven is here described as the Spirit's transformation of relationships so that they lead to the wholeness of life. Eating in heaven is affirmed as a full participation in the lives of others. But eating is also transformed so that its destructiveness is overcome. Eating matters in this life and the next because it is a realization – imperfect now, but perfect then – of God's eternal communion-building life.



IT IS AN HONOR TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FRIENDS AND INSTITUTIONS that have both helped make this book possible and helped to make it better. Jim Lewis of the Louisville Institute and Dorothy Bass of the Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith provided generous financial support in the form of grants. Colleagues at the University of Lethbridge, University of Florida, Davidson College, Middlebury College, Loyola College, Yale Divinity School, Canadian Mennonite University, University of Nottingham, Augustana College, Mars Hill College, Furman University, Hope College, Western Theological Seminary, Transylvania University, Loyola Marymount University, and Duke Divinity School offered venues in which ideas could be tested and clarified. Several churches opened their doors to me, providing hospitality and good conversation. Bron Taylor, editor of the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture*, published material that eventually made its way into Chapter 6. Eric Crahan at Cambridge University Press took an early interest in this project and was a most valuable help shepherding it to publication. Tanner Capps produced the index. I thank them all.

I would also like to offer my thanks to friends who read portions or the whole of this book in draft forms, offering valuable suggestions for improvement: Fred Bahnson, Steven Bouma-Prediger, Brian Brock, Jason Byassee, Ellen Davis, Stanley Hauerwas, Judith Heyhoe, Willis Jenkins, Randy Maddox, Sarah Musser, Michael Northcott, Jeremy Troxler, and Matthew Whelan. I am especially grateful to Stanley for his gracious acceptance of my invitation to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating

Norman Wirzba

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xix

write a Foreword for this book. It is a privilege and a joy to be in the company of so much kindness, wisdom, and good sense. The errors that remain in this book are clearly a reflection of the fact that I have not listened well enough to their good advice.

Writing this book has been a humbling experience. What began as a fairly straightforward endeavor – namely, an attempt to discover what a theological account of eating might look like – has brought me to the realization that my own eating hardly measures up to the reconciling, communion-building desire of God. I am in no position to install myself as the theological food police! I offer this book with the hope that as eaters we might together become more merciful and charitable in the eating that we do.

One of life's greatest gifts is the loving support of a home and family. I have been gifted beyond all comprehension or deserving by my wife Gretchen and my children Emily, Anna, Benjamin, and Luke. My own nurture began with my parents Ingrid and Alex Wirzba. My mother has cooked some of my most memorable and delicious meals, and my father has been one of the most generous hosts I know. I thank them for their love and example. I dedicate this book to them.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19550-8 - Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating
Norman Wirzba
Frontmatter
[More information](#)
