

What is the Role of Faith Communities in Food Governance?



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Faith and Food?



- Two “f” words that cannot be further apart??
- Like an “ecological spirituality”!
- What can faith contribute to multi-disciplinary discourse on food with its many specializations?
- What can faith contribute on its own terms, i.e. beyond mere functional terms, e.g. as influential lobby groups?
- FBOs and religious communities do have considerable influence – for better and for worse!
- The role of weekly participation, considerable numbers, trusted leadership, commitment, moral codes, funds – no party or trade union comes close! Soapies?

Religious discourse on food

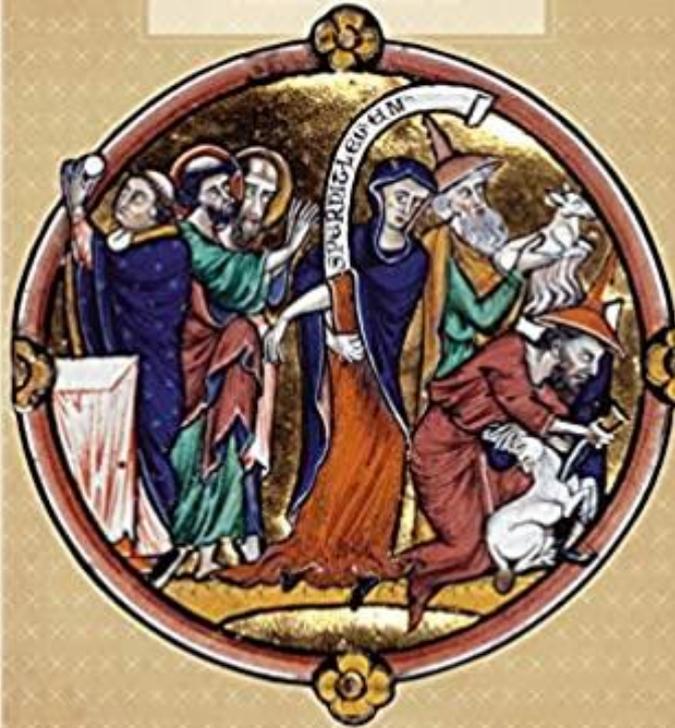


- More than one may think ...
- Very material, e.g. Christianity: eating the Son of God!
- Not only meals with religious significance (Passover, Eucharist)
- Not only prescribed rituals (Halaal, Kosher foods)
- Not only prohibitions on what you may and may not eat (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam)
- Not only how much you may eat (overindulgence)
- Not only with whom you may eat (commensality)
- Certainly not how you should eat (etiquette)
- Not just about food values and food duties
- Especially a concern with who does not eat (the hungry)
- Also what eating may mean ...

FOREIGNERS AND THEIR

FOOD

CONSTRUCTING OTHERNESS IN JEWISH,
CHRISTIAN, AND ISLAMIC LAW



DAVID M. FREIDENREICH

What do we do when we eat?

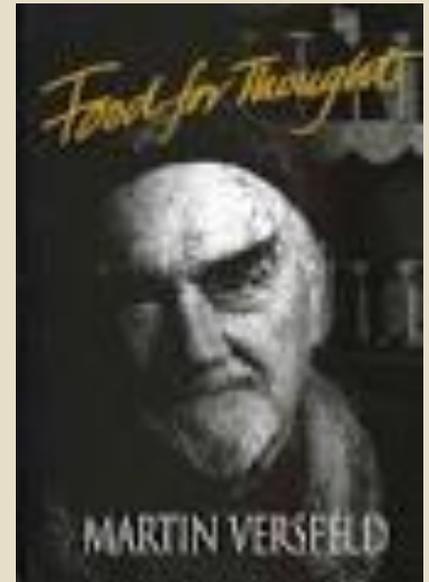


- Biophysical throughput in order to sustain an organism?
- Teeth, tongue, chewing, swallowing, digesting, urinating, defecating, sewage and faith?
- Cleanliness? Enjoyment? Fellowship?
- Killing to eat? From “meat is murder” (vegetarians) to murdering carrots (fruitarians)
- Except for nuts, seeds, fruit! (Genesis 1!)
- Stealing required in the case of milk, honey and eggs.
- Thus many unresolved issues ...!
- Human exceptionalism assumed – and defended religiously as being the “image of God”, the “crown of creation”

Food governance: Multiple issues



- Food relief
- Food security
- Food sustenance (nutrition)
- Food sovereignty
- Food governance
- Food and sustainability
- Food for thought (philosophy)
- ... and faith?



What distinct contribution can FBOs make?



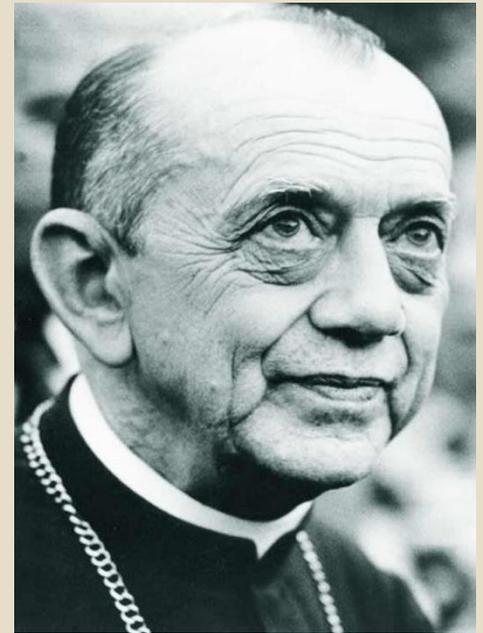
George Byarugaba	Food symbolism and food insecurity
Sumaya Hassan	Muslim over-indulgence?
Manitza Kotze	Genetically modified food & sin-talk
Rochelle Davids	FBO Staff perceptions on underlying causes of food insecurity
Job Matenda	Use of indigenous vegetables
Luqmaan Kagee	Providing nutritious food
Cassiem Khan	Policies on food relief and food security
Zukile Ngqeza	Food security & social cohesion >> <<

Where, then, does the problem lie?



- Who is poor? “Not those who have nothing but those who have no-one” And who is hungry?
- Why are the poor poor?
- Why are hungry hungry?

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist.”



- Many structural reasons but ... also personal ones

Where, then, does the problem lie?



- A sense of hopelessness: unemployment, broken families, gangsterism and drugs
- A mother who scolds (skel)!
- Role models around as living proof
- Moral formation and moral malformation
- Misplaced religious rules
- Dangers of playing God *and* doing nothing (sloth)
- Not using what is available, not knowing how
- Honour (for those providing food relief) and
- Shame (for those who are hungry and destitute)

Conclusions



- The structural problems are crucial but addressing them not enough to ensure food security
- The role of resilience while living with and amid such structural problems
- None of the factors contributing to resilience can be “organised” by organisations (FBOs)
- None of these can be resolved merely by research and policy intervention.
- The role of faith is important – for better and for worse!