

Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation
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Honoring God by manufacturing food?

I regularly teach a class on eating and the life of faith. At the opening of each class, I ask a student to give a short report on a favorite food. I ask them to research where the food comes from and how it is produced and marketed, and to assess its nutritional value. Almost without fail they begin their presentations by saying, "Well, I won't be eating this anymore!" They also report on how difficult it was for them to learn about the food. When companies are called, they rarely give straight or helpful answers. Websites are full of misinformation. Food companies don't want you to understand the food. They want you to think that eating their product is fun or sexy or performance-enhancing. Think about the ever-popular and even iconic Twinkie, one of America's best-loved snack cakes: President Clinton put one in a time capsule! What's it doing in our stomachs?

The shame of our eating becomes clearer when we consider the chicken nugget that millions of children like to eat. To get on a kid's meal menu, it has to be cheap. To make it cheap, the chicken-producer has to be paid the smallest amount possible. To raise chicken most efficiently, the chicken-producer has to find ways to get more chickens into his or her barns and then get them to butcher weight as quickly as possible. To do that, it is best to genetically alter chickens so that their breasts become huge really fast, since Americans crave white meat. Today's engineered, confined chicken reaches full size in nearly half the time of traditional breeds. The enhanced breasts of these birds become so burdensome that many chickens' legs break under their own crushing weight. It is also important that their diets be supplemented by antibiotics, because crammed chicken houses are breeding grounds for disease. Room for the chickens to roam is not critical, since their breasts are so large that walking is difficult. Small spaces also make it easier for them to be caught by the poorly paid and often undocumented migrant workers, who cram them into the cages that will deliver them to a slaughterhouse where they will be disassembled on a factory line.

Very little, if anything, in this process honors or treats these chickens as gifts of God. Industrial methods of chicken production require that they fall within a *logos* or production system that stresses efficiency, uniformity and

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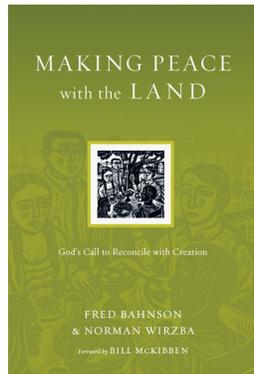
BOOK EXCERPT



Fred Bahnson is a permaculture gardener, a pioneer in church-supported agriculture, and an award-winning poet and essayist. He was a Kellogg Food & Society Policy Fellow at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the cofounder and former director of Anathoth Community Garden in Cedar Grove, North Carolina. He is the author of *Soil and Sacrament* (forthcoming from Free Press).

profitability. If we had the mind of Christ, however, and saw these creatures as having a role in God’s new creation, we would think about what we can do to make sure that our relationships with chickens contributed to their nurture, health and even delight. Because Christ is the one through whom and for whom the whole world is created, chickens are part of his renewing ministry that leads all creatures into the fullness of life. Inspired and shaped by Christ’s reconciling life, we must concern ourselves with the well-being of animals, working to make sure that they can live the life God intends for them. When we treat chickens the way God expects, which means that we devote ourselves to their care, shame disappears to make room for celebration.

—From chapter 5, “Reconciliation Through Eating”



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"A thoughtful, thorough and edgy book on one of the most urgent issues on earth. I can't wait to start giving copies away."

—Shane Claiborne, author, activist and recovering sinner, www.thesimpleway.org

Latest book in IVP's Resources for Reconciliation series tackles the root of restoration between humans and creation

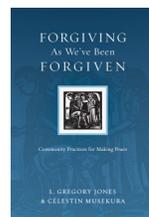
In *Making Peace with the Land*, the most recent title in the Resources for Reconciliation series from IVP, authors Fred Bahnsen and Norman Wirzba work to help Christians understand our biblical requirement to care for one of our most precious gifts from God: the land and all its creatures.

This series shows how to reconcile different types of conflicts, and this book shows that God is reconciling all things in heaven and on earth. Our alienation from the land that gives us life is causing damage not only to our ecosystems, but also to our own bodies.

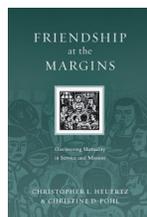
"We're running Genesis backward, de-creating," explains Bill McKibben, the world's foremost environmentalist and a Methodist Sunday school teacher. The general public has almost no understanding of where our food comes from and how it almost magically appears before us at least three times a day.

Through personal stories and poignant data, Bahnsen and Wirzba show how current industrialized practices are unsustainable, but also that redemption from farm to dinner table is possible.

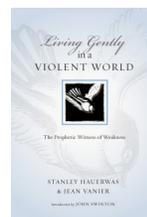
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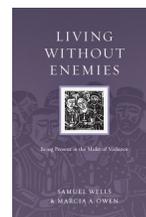
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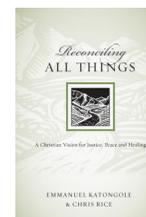
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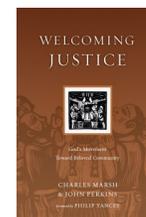
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