

CHAPTER 10

LIVING ONE FOR THE OTHER: EUCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY AS ECOLOGICAL HOSPITALITY

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Gift of ground, this earth seed, grain
and grinding, labour of loam and light,
labour of leaf and hand,
brought by hand
for blessing.

Gift of ground, this earth fruit, grape
and grafting, labour of soil and sun,
labour of vine and vintner,
brought by hand
for blessing.

I want to begin, but not necessarily end, with an ideal picture. Let me suggest that in the matter of bread and wine, the matter of women's and men's bodies and blood, and in the particular human communities gathered to celebrate, Eucharist brings into focus the reality of Earth-being as interconnected and interdependent. Not only do I hope that this ideal picture is real, but from time to time I experience it as such. At the same time, Eucharist can enable us to understand and live, from the deep knowledge that we are inextricably part of the Earth community. Two aspects of the sacrament of Eucharist—as sign and grace—not only turn us toward Earth, but themselves spring from an Earth community that, while not necessarily divine, carries a material transcendence that co-inheres with the immanent otherness of God.¹

1. On a material transcendence, see Anne Elvey, 'Material Elements: The Matter of Women, the Matter of Earth, the Matter of God', in Lisa Isherwood and Kathleen McPhillips (eds), *Post-Christian Feminisms: A Critical Approach* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 53–69 and Anne Elvey,

By material transcendence, I refer to the otherness (alterity) that is proper to the matter from which all things in the cosmos – stars, rocks, minerals, air, water, plants, animals, including humans – are composed, an otherness toward which humans can orient themselves in openness and humility. Since humans are part of a more than human cosmos, this otherness is also an otherness within humans. Humans share in the materiality of all creatures, from distant suns to the dust on the windowsill and the micro-organisms that inhabit human intestines. Like the transcendent otherness of God, this shared materiality – which is not fully graspable through human reason and the senses – can be welcomed as a calling forth toward communion. Rather than furthering a matter/spirit split, I want to affirm that in the materiality of Earth is its transcendence. Without reducing the idea of spirit to an organizational principal of matter, which is always already organized in one way or another, I want to affirm the coherence of spirit with matter in a material transcendence.² Here, divine immanence and a material transcendence are co-abiding alterities at the heart of Earth (and cosmic) being, such that they cannot be separated from the materiality in which they co-inhere. This incarnational understanding of a material transcendence is the basis for my exploration of Eucharist as a sacrament of Earth.

Teilhard de Chardin's essays 'The Mass on the World' begins in this vein:

Since once again, Lord – though this time not in the forests of the Aisne but in the steppes of Asia – I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.³

Teilhard understands Eucharist on a cosmic scale, with Earth not only as table at which the celebrant gathers other-than-human and human elements, those present in the steppes of Asia that morning and those present to his imagination, but also as itself bread and wine for consecration. While it is not a great extrapolation to read in

¹ 'Ashes and Dust: On (Not) Speaking About God Ecologically', *Concilium*, no. 3 (2009), pp. 37–38.

² Cf. Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 223.

³ Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Mass on the World' in *Hymn of the Universe* (London: Collins, 1965), p. 19.

Teilhard's 'Mass on the World' a sense of earthly interconnectedness and interdependence that for him was directed toward an immense evolutionary leap in the cosmic Christ, two threads remain in tension for ecological and feminist readings. On the one hand, 'The Mass on the World' celebrates matter as sacred in a way that is consonant not only with a Christian understanding of sacraments and sacrality, but also with much contemporary deep ecological philosophy and spirituality. On the other hand, the whole idea of a mass on the world, and the voice in which it is expressed, retain strong elements of anthropocentric (and hierarchical) presumption. The voice of the priest (*hiereus*) dominates. In a Roman Catholic tradition where many experience the priesthood as exclusive, I need to read 'The Mass on the World' with a hermeneutic of suspicion, both feminist and ecological. For example, on the feast of the Transfiguration when Teilhard is writing, does Earth need a human priest to mediate its transformation?

Denis Edwards comments that for Teilhard: 'The unique presence of Christ in the Eucharist is extended in the divinizing presence of Christ at work in the whole of creation. The Eucharist is an effective prayer for the transformation of the universe in Christ.'⁴ Here, the Eucharist is locus of the presence of Christ and prayer for transformation. The presence of Christ in the Earth community, as part of the created cosmos, is an extension of the eucharistic presence. Thus, while affirmed, Earth is represented as secondary – acted on, as a subject of eucharistic transformation. Turning to the theology of John Zizioulas, Edwards writes:

When humans come to the Eucharist, they offer to God the fruits of creation. In the Eucharist, creation is lifted up to God in offering and thanksgiving ... this "lifting up" of creation is not confined to the ordained but is the God-given role of all the faithful ... It involves all human interactions with the rest of creation.⁵

While there is a shift from the hierarchical (priestly) focus of 'The Mass on the World' to a focus on the humans who gather to celebrate Eucharist and to their interaction with the rest of the cosmic (and hence more locally the Earth) community, creation 'lifted up' remains acted on, rather than active, except through the 'God-given' agency

4. Denis Edwards, 'Celebrating Eucharist in a Time of Global Climate Change', *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 19, no. 1 (February 2006), p. 7.

5. Edwards, 'Celebrating Eucharist', p. 9.

of human creatures. In comparison, can we understand the transformation that Eucharist is, in a way that also affirms the agency of a more than human Earth community where the term 'more than human' signals an Earth community that includes humans among its many constituents, most of which are other than human?

Rosemary Radford Ruether writes of transformation:

From repentance one turns in the liturgical process to hope for transformation; of restored and renewed creation; of a new communion of humans with all our fellow creatures rooted and sustained by our Creator God. The blessing and sharing of eucharistic bread and wine should be reembedded in its creational context.⁶

Re-embedding Eucharist in its creational context, I suggest, needs to begin with understanding Earth as the context for, rather than subject to, eucharistic transformation. In this essay, I consider the relationship between Earth and Eucharist, and interpret Eucharist as a sacrament of the Earth (and by extension cosmic) community. I argue that Eucharist expresses (in the strongest sense of the word) the character of the Earth community as *for the other*. Eucharist offers the possibility of transformation in which humans understand themselves more fully as participants (and co-agents) in this Earthly *living for the other*.

An Earthly Interdependence

The Earth Bible project sets out six ecojustice principles, of which the principle of interconnectedness reads: 'Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.'⁷ This is the grounding principle for my essay. Beatrice Bruteau describes this interconnectedness and mutual dependence as eucharistic: 'I want to perceive Earth as a Eucharistic Planet, a Good Gift planet, which is structured as mutual feeding, as intimate self-sharing.'⁸ She argues further that a

6. Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2003), p. 33.

7. Norman C. Habel (ed.), *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* (The Earth Bible 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p. 24.

8. Beatrice Bruteau, 'Eucharistic Ecology and Ecological Spirituality', *Cross Currents* 40, no. 4 (Winter 1990/1991), pp. 499-514; <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&an=9611263218>; accessed 15 October 2009.

'sense of the Eucharistic Planet, of the Real Presence of the Divine in the world, is something we need now for the protection of the planet'.⁹ A description of Earth as a 'Good Gift planet' may seem overly romantic against the background of extreme weather events such as tsunamis, floods and bush fires. Nevertheless, a focus on the interdependence of Earth—characterized by 'mutual feeding' and 'intimate self-sharing'—as itself sacramental and the basis for the celebration of the sacrament of Eucharist, offers participants a vantage from which to re-view their interactions in the Earth community. For Bruteau, such a revision would entail replacing the 'domination paradigm'—of which ecological theologians such as Ruether and philosophers such as Val Plumwood are justly critical—with the 'communion paradigm'.¹⁰

Hospitality and Sacrifice

Hospitality and sacrifice represent two related aspects of a 'communion paradigm'. Anne Primavesi offers a helpful description of the material basis of this communion:

I would suggest that when we reflect on the image of Jesus inviting us to remember him by taking bread and wine, blessing and sharing it, saying: "This is my body; this is my blood", we look at that image in present time and understand the bread and wine as his body and blood because they sustained his life: just as food and drink now sustain ours. Without them, he would have had no body. Without them, we would not be here to remember his body in the present. The continuity between his life and mine lies ultimately in our shared dependence on the gifts given us by the land. I, like him, depend on earth and its photosynthesizing labours; on water and its cleansing power; on air and the chemicals it transpires; and above all, on the heat of the sun fuelling Gaian biogeochemical cycles. His incarnation, like mine, depended on all of these.¹¹

9. Bruteau, 'Eucharistic Ecology'.

10. Bruteau, 'Eucharistic Ecology'; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 173–201; Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 41–68.

11. Anne Primavesi, *Sacred Gaia: Holistic Theology and Earth System Science* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 174.

Like Bruteau, Primavesi appeals to the notion of Earth's gifts. She understands the givenness of Earth, 'built up over deep time' and supporting 'countless' more than human others, as Earth's gift, which we so often misunderstand.¹² We forget both the conditions for Earth's ongoing sustenance of human life and the many other than human lives Earth sustains. Just as parenting labour, especially maternal labour, is often denied and omitted from our economic accounting particularly in Western societies, the labour of Earth is elided.¹³ Redressing this, Primavesi describes Earth's 'photosynthesizing labours' in the context of Eucharist. The beautiful words prayed during the celebration of Eucharist to describe the bread and wine—'fruit of the earth and work of human hands'—accord the labour to humans, as if humans are separate from Earth for which all is an easy coming to fruit. The prayer that opens this essay offers alternative imagery. From an ecological perspective, bread and wine are the fruit of both other-than-human and human labour. Moreover, humans and Earth others are interconnected not only in this shared labour but also by the very act of consumption.

The necessity of consumption to our lives, albeit dangerously exaggerated in global consumerist economics, implies that our being is never solely singular but, to borrow a term from Jean Luc Nancy, 'singular plural'.¹⁴ As Angel F. Méndez Montoya argues, food 'displays a complex interrelation between self and other; object and subject; appetite and digestion; aesthetics, ethics, and politics; nature and culture; and creation and divinity'.¹⁵ The interrelatedness characteristic of food implies, as Nancy does in a different context, that being is always co-being, co-existence, being-with-, being-toward-, being-for- the other. Pregnant and nursing women know this in their bodies in a particular way. In a eucharistic context, we can understand this being-for-the-other as *a constitutive hospitality*. That is, the Earth community is shaped by hospitality. But being-for-the-other is not without its cost. The other side of hospitality is *sacrifice*.

12. Anne Primavesi, *Gaia's Gift: Earth, Ourselves and God After Copernicus* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 134–35.

13. See, for example, Ariel Salleh on the 'holding labour' of women and Earth in Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 153.

14. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

15. Angel F. Méndez Montoya, *The Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. ix.

In our eating, drinking, clothing and sheltering ourselves, and in our being food for mosquitoes, lice, and sometimes rarely crocodiles or sharks, we participate in this earthly being-for-the-other that links life and death. For the late Val Plumwood, herself a one-time survivor of a crocodile attack, the link between food and death needs to be recalled so that we can re-imagine 'ourselves ecologically, as members of a larger earth community of radical equality, mutual nurturance and support'.¹⁶ By understanding the interdependence of the Earth community – especially as it arrives in the food-death nexus – as a mode of being-for-the-other, we can understand Eucharist as a particular expression of the hospitality and sacrifice that underlie that earthly interdependence.

Tragically, eucharistic being-for-the-other has been distorted both in our contemporary consumerist culture and in the theological tradition. For Carol Adams and Marjorie Proctor-Smith, for example, the sacrificial aspect of Eucharist is of particular concern in relation to our treatment of other animals:

The tradition of animal sacrifice continues to exercise its influence on the symbolic language which came to be applied to the eucharistic meal and its nonanimal food elements. As the identification of the bread and wine with the presence of Christ becomes more and more the focus of theological reflection, the language becomes increasingly reminiscent of the eating of meat. At the scholastic level, medieval theologians were able to speak of the bread becoming the real flesh of Christ and the wine his blood, a change which was brought about by the so-called "Words of Institution": "this is my body," "this is by blood." At the devotional level, tales of bleeding hosts (eucharistic bread; Latin *hostia* means "an animal slain in sacrifice") were popular and widespread. Thus earlier notions that Jesus' death brought an end to sacrifice were replaced by the notion that the Mass was a repetition (in some sense) of Jesus' sacrifice, which moreover was understood as a kind of animal sacrifice.¹⁷

16. Val Plumwood, 'Tasteless: Towards a Food-based Approach to Death', *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature* 5 (2008), p. 64.

17. Carol J. Adams and Marjorie Procter-Smith, 'Taking Life or "Taking on Life"?', in Carol J. Adams (ed.), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 306. Cf. John Berkman, 'The Consumption of Animals and the Catholic Tradition', in Steve F. Sapontzis (ed.), *Food for Thought: The Debate over Eating MEAT* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), p. 203.

When we offer hospitality, when we share meals, there is always a hidden reliance on earth others. While Eucharist does not involve the consumption of other animals, the celebration of Eucharist relies on: 1) sun's labour, the labour of the whole cycle of transpiration, plants' labour, soils' labour, and human labour in the growing of grain and grape and then in its mediation into bread and wine; 2) the provision of an Earth space for gathering; 3) human bodies and voices, air and breath, and so much more. As Adams and Proctor-Smith show in relation to other animals, the celebration of Eucharist also relies on the making of symbols in a symbolic order that constructs women and nature as other, excluding women from leadership and subordinating Earth to heaven. Luce Irigaray thus asks, what is sacrificed when we offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist?¹⁸

Communion without Communion

In Roman Catholic practice, the ritual of eucharistic communion puts some women in a double bind. As Anne-Claire Mulder comments, Eucharist is not only a taking part in the body of Christ, but as ritual it constructs 'a' local body of Christ in a way that is both inclusive and exclusive of women.¹⁹ 'They are present at the scene, while the scene re-enacts their exclusion from the scene.'²⁰ This experience of being simultaneously absent and present makes Eucharist a communion without communion for many women, but not only for women. In ways that are arguably more poignant, Eucharist is a communion without communion for many, both human and other than human.

Pedro Arrupe's much quoted comment – 'If there is hunger anywhere in the world then our celebration of Eucharist is somehow incomplete in the world'²¹ – reflects the terrible paradox that while the celebration of the eucharistic meal occurs others are without food. In 2009, a Catholic church-based aid agency, such as Caritas, links

18. See especially, 'Women, the Sacred, Money', in Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* (trans. Gillian C. Gill; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 73–88. Cf. Dennis King Keenan, 'Irigaray and the Sacrifice of the Sacrifice of Woman', *Hypatia* 19, no. 4 (2004), pp. 167–83.

19. Anne-Claire Mulder, *Divine Flesh, Embodied Word: Incarnation as a Hermeneutical Key to a Feminist Theologian's Reading of Luce Irigaray's Work* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 66.

20. Mulder, *Divine Flesh, Embodied Word*, p. 66.

21. From his speech given at the Eucharistic Congress, Philadelphia, 1976.

climate change and increasing food insecurity and hunger.²² William Blake's 1794 poem, 'Holy Thursday', represents the experience of poverty as an 'eternal winter', an image of a more than human Earth community out of climatic balance:

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields and bleak and bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns;
It is eternal winter there.

For where-e'er the sun does shine,
And where-e'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.²³

Not only is winter a time when poverty is felt with particular keenness, but poverty becomes its own winter, a winter that encompasses all who live in 'a land of poverty' not only those who hunger. But the feast of the institution of the Eucharist, Holy Thursday, which in the northern hemisphere occurs in spring – when sun may shine and rain fall – not only sets into relief the reality of poverty, but offers an alternative paradigm.

In the second testament accounts of the last supper, Jesus offers himself as food (Mt. 26.26; Mk 14.22; Lk. 22.19; 1 Cor. 11.24) and shifts the paradigm of service by presenting himself as both host and slave (Lk. 22.27; Jn 13.1-11). Where otherwise hospitality might rely on the unseen labour of other humans and the wider Earth community, Jesus brings this labour of sustenance and service to the fore by taking it on himself. Further, in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke paints a picture of

22. See, for example, 'Climate change risks unprecedented global hunger in our life time', Caritas.org, 4 November 2009; www.caritas.org/newsroom/press_releases/PressRelease04_11_09b.html, accessed 5 June 2010.

23. William Blake, 'Holy Thursday', in *Selected Poems*, edn with an introduction and notes by G. E. Bentley, Jr (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 118.

an ideal community in which eucharistic hospitality overflows into everyday generosity so that none is in need (Acts 2.44–47; see also, Prov. 22.9). But this eucharistic vision of communion is called into question by human poverty.

The ability to share (or refuse to share food) is a theological issue.²⁴ Our distortion of the necessity of consumption undoes the meaning of eucharistic hospitality, as Anne Primavesi explains:

for the hungry, food forces itself on their attention as an insistent symbol of life sustained or destroyed. But our consumer-glutted society keeps us safely at one remove from hunger's savage insistence. Hunger is a forgotten feeling. Here to eat well means to eat less. And to live well no longer implies sharing food or hospitality with others, since it is assumed they can provide for themselves or, if not, that there are organizations, state-funded or otherwise, who will look after them.

This has led to a loss of the essential correspondence between the ritual meal of bread and wine and the role played by food, and by its sharing, in our lives.²⁵

The loss of correspondence between the symbols of communion and the actual communion of Earth life becomes particularly poignant in relation to hunger strikes. Hunger strikes undertaken to emphasize, and force change with regard to, particular injustices highlight the disjunction between the interdependence of the Earth community, as expressed in our need to eat and drink, and the broken relationships of injustice, subordination and oppression which deny this interdependence. Two examples are of particular moment in the context of eucharistic communion: the reality that many women have felt impelled to undertake a spiritual hunger strike by abstaining from eucharistic celebrations which deny their full humanity; the hunger strikes in 2005 and 2007 of Brazilian bishop Dom Luiz Flavio Cappio over a major river diversion and irrigation project on the São Francisco River. The river is 2,700 kilometers-long, 'has 168 tributaries, only 99 of which are perennial rivers [and] flows through one of the poorest regions of Brazil, where millions live in poverty. The northeast region of Brazil has suffered from desertification and drought, yet agribusiness companies have been the primary

24. Méndez Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, pp. 40–41.

25. Primavesi, *Gaia's Gift*, p. 134.

beneficiaries of irrigation projects, used mostly to grow export crops.²⁶ While the diversion of the river would seriously affect the biodiversity of the area and the sustenance of local people, both of which Dom Cappio wished to protect, proponents of the project argued that it would benefit around 12 million people in the northeast of Brazil.²⁷ The bishop's hunger strikes, during which celebrations of Eucharist attracted large crowds of supporters, highlight the difficult and sometimes contested relationships between environmental devastation and conservation, poverty and development, and the fracturing of the Earthy eucharistic framework of our need to eat.

Being Consumed

Ecological justice advocates remind us of the complex interrelationships between environmental devastation, particularly climate change, and poverty and oppression in human communities. In the eucharistic framework of our need to eat, poverty, hunger and malnutrition are in stark contrast to consumerism and over-consumption. As William Cavanaugh argues, in contemporary consumerist societies, consumption entails a kind of detachment from production (we make very little of what we consume); from producers (the lives and working conditions of those who make what we consume are largely hidden from us); and from products (the desire for the new encourages us not to become too attached to the things we already own and use; inbuilt redundancy consolidates this detachment from the things we own as we feel forced to participate in a 'throw-away' society).²⁸ Products have become 'mute as to their origins'; moreover our relationships with things 'are not made to last'.²⁹ Consumption is linked to pleasure 'not so much in the possession of things as in their

26. See, Lucigleide Nery Nascimento, 'Brazilian Bishop on Hunger Strike to Protect River', *World Rivers Review* (December 2007) www.international-rivers.org/en/node/4804, accessed 15 January 2010.

27. See Nascimento, 'Brazilian Bishop on Hunger Strike to Protect River'; also 'Hunger Strike to Save River: Brazil Bishop Luiz Flavio Cappio' <http://waterfortheages.org/2007/12/19/hunger-strike-to-save-river-%E2%80%93-brazil-bishop-luiz-flavio-cappio/> and 'Brazil bishop ends hunger strike', BBC News, Friday 21 December 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7153078.stm>, accessed 15 January 2010.

28. William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 37–47.

29. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, pp. 45–46.

pursuit'.³⁰ For Cavanaugh '[c]onsumerism is an important subject for theology because it is a spiritual disposition, a way of looking at the world around us that is deeply formative'.³¹ A distorted relation to consumption disconnects consumers from knowledge of the interdependent relationships of production in which our practices of consumption are embedded. We cannot escape this interconnectedness, but we displace the effects of our consumptive and over-consumptive habits when we systematically detach ourselves from the things we use, their producers and their manner and sites of production.

Nevertheless, we need to consume to live. For Cavanaugh, we need to consider then 'what kinds of practices of consumption are conducive to an abundant life for all'.³² When Jesus 'offers his body and blood to be consumed', Eucharist brings consumption into the sphere of the sacred and the unity of the body of Christ, engaging us in a different relationship to consumption.³³ While Eucharist could itself become a kind of product, assimilated 'into a consumerist ... spirituality', Cavanaugh argues that the 'practice of the Eucharist is resistant to such appropriation, ... because the consumer of the Eucharist is taken up into a larger body, the body of Christ'.³⁴ Through consuming the Eucharist, we are consumed into the body of Christ. We become food for others. This eucharistic relation to consumption echoes the embeddedness of all creatures in an interdependent Earth community where being is being-for-the-other.

Therefore, ecological justice concerns such as the impact of food production on a wider Earth community, intensive farming practices, battery chickens, feed lots, crops and agribusiness, genetic modification, land use and water use impact on our celebration of Eucharist. They both point to a brokenness at the heart of our communion and call us to engaged communion with Earth others. This is not a new communion, but a renewed recognition of, and openness to, our participation in the interconnectedness of Earth being. Part of this recognition entails the acknowledgement that the brokenness of our relationships to the things we consume and the conditions of their

30. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, p. 47.

31. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, p. 35.

32. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, p. 53.

33. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, p. 54.

34. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, p. 54.

production, has become a brokenness in ourselves. As Neil Darragh argues, to use things, 'in an exploitative way that does not recognize [their] continuing God-immanence is to violate both the inner being of the resource and the inner being of the user, for these are ultimately the same'.³⁵ Communion is inescapable.

Communion as Vocation

The eucharistic practice of table fellowship enacts a 'co-belonging with one another, humanity with creation, and the whole of creation with God'.³⁶ John Chryssavgis interprets Andrei Rublev's icon *The Holy Trinity*, also known as 'the hospitality of Abraham', as an image of communion with the world where God is experienced as communion:

The three persons of the Trinity are seated on three of the four sides of the rectangular table, allowing for, or rather inviting, the world to communion. Indeed, the very contours of their bodies create and reproduce in macro-image the communion chalice about which these angels are seated. The potential sacredness of the world is more than a possibility; it is a vocation.³⁷

The eucharistic words occurring in the second testament give a particular nuance to this vocation. As table 1 shows, these words occur both in accounts of the last supper and in the feeding stories of the Gospels. In Luke's version of the feeding of five thousand *men* (Lk. 9.12-17), Jesus *takes* five loaves and two fish looks up to heaven, *blesses, breaks* and *gives* (Lk. 9.16). The actions of *taking*, looking up to heaven, *blessing* and *breaking* occur in the parallel passage in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (Mk 6.41; Mt. 14.19b). In the Markan Last Supper four of the actions occur: *taking, blessing, breaking* and *giving* (Mk 14.22). The Lukan version has *taking, giving thanks, breaking*

35. Neil Darragh, *At Home in the Earth: Seeking an Earth-centred Spirituality* (Ponsonby, Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000), p. 154.

36. Méndez Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, pp. 151-52.

37. John Chryssavgis, 'The World of the Icon and Creation: An Orthodox Perspective on Ecology and Pneumatology', in Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 88-89. On Eucharist and the experience of God as Trinitarian communion, see Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 19.

and *giving* (Lk. 22.19), while the breaking of the bread in the Emmaus narrative is described by *taking, blessing, breaking* and *giving* (Lk. 24.30). A second version of the feeding, found in Matthew and Mark but not in Luke, has *taking, giving thanks, breaking* and *giving* (Mt. 15.36; Mk 8.6). The feeding narrative in the Gospel of John has the sequence: *taking, giving thanks*, and *distributing* (Jn 6.11). The first letter to the Corinthians has *taking, giving thanks* and *breaking* (1 Cor. 11.23–24). According to Joseph Fitzmyer both sequences, *taking-blessing-breaking-giving* and *taking-giving thanks-breaking-giving* were probably used in early Christian eucharistic rituals, with the former being the earlier version.³⁸

The verb *eulogeō*, to bless, frequently refers to a blessing on the divine (for example, Gen. 24.48; Deut. 8.10; Pss. 15.7; 25.12; 33.2 LXX) or a divine blessing (for example, Gen. 1.22, 28; 5.2; 9.1; 12.2; Judg. 13.24 LXX). In the Gospel of Luke, for example, *eulogeō* can refer to human praise of God (Lk. 1.64; 2.28; 24.53) or to an invocation of divine blessing on a human being sometimes as a recognition that a particular person is divinely favoured or blessed (for example, Lk. 1.42; 2.34; 6.28; 13.35; 19.38; 24.50–51).³⁹ But in the feeding narrative of Luke 9, the object of blessing is neither human nor divine; the Lukan Jesus invokes a blessing on bread and fish (9.16). The direct blessing of bread and fish suggests not only a calling down of divine blessing on these foods, offered in response to the need of the crowd for sustenance, but also a recognition that such foods are already divinely favoured or blessed. Moreover, it is not these foods uniquely that are recognized as blessed, but bread (and fish as well in this instance) is blessed inasmuch as it stands for food in general.

Somewhere in the practice of the early church, the verb *eulogeō*, to bless, becomes *eucharisteō*, to give thanks, which gives us our word: Eucharist.⁴⁰ The food necessary to sustain life, declared blessed (Lk.

38. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 767–68.

39. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker; 2nd rev.edn; Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 322.

40. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, pp. 767–68. Unlike the verb *eulogeō*, *eucharisteō* occurs infrequently in the Septuagint, being found only six times and those instances being outside what became the canon of the Hebrew Bible (Jdt. 8.25; 2 Mac. 1.11; 12.31; 3 Mac. 7.16; Ode 14.8; Wis. 18.2).

Table 1. Eucharistic Blessing and Thanksgiving in the Gospels

	<i>Taking-blessing-breaking-giving</i>	<i>Taking-giving thanks-breaking-giving</i>
Feeding stories	<p>And taking (<i>labōn</i>) the five loaves and the two fish, [Jesus] looked up to heaven, and blessed (<i>eulogēsen</i>) and broke (<i>kateklasen</i>) them, and gave (<i>edidou</i>) them to the disciples to set before the crowd (Lk. 9.16 NRSV)</p> <p>Taking (<i>labōn</i>) the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed (<i>eulogēsen</i>) and broke (<i>kateklasen</i>) the loaves, and gave (<i>edidou</i>) them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all (Mk 6.41 NRSV)</p> <p>Taking (<i>labōn</i>) the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed (<i>eulogēsen</i>) and broke (<i>klases</i>) the loaves, and gave (<i>edōken</i>) them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds (Mt. 14.19b NRSV)</p>	<p>... and he took (<i>labōn</i>) the seven loaves, and after giving thanks (<i>eucharistēsas</i>) he broke (<i>eklasen</i>) them and gave (<i>edidou</i>) them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd (Mk 8.6b NRSV)</p> <p>He took (<i>elaben</i>) the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks (<i>eucharistēsas</i>) he broke (<i>eklasen</i>) them and gave (<i>edidou</i>) them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds (Mt. 15.36 NRSV)</p> <p>Then Jesus took (<i>elaben</i>) the loaves, and when he had given thanks (<i>eucharistēsas</i>), he distributed (<i>diedōken</i>) them to those who were seated (Jn 6.11a NRSV)</p>
Last Supper narratives	<p>While they were eating, he took (<i>labōn</i>) a loaf of bread, and after blessing (<i>eulogēsas</i>) it he broke (<i>eklasen</i>) it, gave (<i>edōken</i>) it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body' (Mk 14.22 NRSV)</p> <p>While they were eating, Jesus took (<i>labōn</i>) a loaf of bread, and after blessing (<i>eulogēsas</i>) it he broke (<i>eklasen</i>) it, gave (<i>dous</i>) it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body' (Mt. 26.26 NRSV)</p> <p>When he was at the table with them, he took (<i>labōn</i>) bread, blessed (<i>eulogēsen</i>) and broke (<i>klases</i>) it, and gave (<i>epedidou</i>) it to them (Lk. 24.30 NRSV)</p>	<p>For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took (<i>elaben</i>) a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks (<i>eucharistēsas</i>), he broke (<i>eklasen</i>) it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me' (1 Cor. 11.23–24 NRSV)</p> <p>Then he took (<i>labōn</i>) a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks (<i>eucharistēsas</i>), he broke (<i>eklasen</i>) it and gave (<i>edōken</i>) it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me' (Lk. 22.19 NRSV)</p>

9.16; 24.30) is subject of thanksgiving. For Paul, blessing and giving thanks are synonymous (1 Cor. 14.16). In relation to Eucharist, blessing suggests a focus on the mediated Earthly matter of food and drink as of worth in itself, an Earth gift that mediates a divine gift. *Giving thanks* suggests a recognition that what is received from the other, from many others, in eating and drinking, carries with it a blessing (the blessing of sustenance) which calls forth a response in the recipient (namely gratitude).⁴¹ In Lukan and early Christian eucharistic traditions more generally, there is ground for reading a two way movement in relation to matter: an acknowledgment of the blessedness of matter and a call to respond to the blessing matter bestows.

In the feeding stories this material blessing is imaged by the abundance of food. This abundance echoes a scriptural tradition of divine blessing of people and land, accompanying a promise of fertility, prosperity and well-being (Deut. 7.12–14; 16.15; 28.3–6). Because of the close verbal links between the feeding and the last supper narratives, this abundance is mapped on to Eucharist.⁴² While the feeding narratives begin with scarcity, the paradigm shifts to abundance. In the last supper narratives this abundance is bound up with Jesus' impending death. Seen in the light of the blessedness of matter and the call to respond to the blessing matter bestows, Jesus' kenotic self-giving in death is embedded in a eucharistic materiality.

David Toolan describes the material embedding of Eucharist in its cosmic context, as follows:

There are no theatrics here, no magic, simply the highly-charged action of a man who knows he will die on the morrow and must make every word and gesture count. Two great movements converge in what Jesus shows us here: the everlasting desire of cosmic dust to mean something great and God's promise that it shall be done. There is first a centripetal movement. We the followers and the disciples center in on Jesus, identify, become one with him. Then there is the centrifugal, decentralising movement. Jesus, both

41. See also, Darragh, *At Home in the Earth*, p. 163.

42. A third century CE image in the Catacombs of Saint Calixtus depicts this connection with the baskets and fish around the supper table. See *Eucharistic Banquet* (beginning of the 3rd century); Catacombs of Saint Calixtus, Cubiculum of the Sacraments. www.aug.edu/augusta/iconography/newStuffForXnCours/catacumbasCristianas/banqueteEucaristico.html, accessed 19 January 2010.

conduit of Spirit-Energy and cosmic dust himself, freely identifies himself with us and with the fruits of the earth – the ash of a dying star present in bread and wine – and converts these gifts of earth, the work of human hands, into another story than the nightmarish one we have been telling with them.⁴³

Toolan sets two stories in tension: a story of more than human agency and cooperation in the celebration of Eucharist that is a cosmic self-giving and a story of destructive human agency that he describes as ‘nightmarish’. How are we to celebrate Eucharist as cosmic self-gift while we are inside the nightmare of ecological destruction?

In the second testament, two traditions of eucharistic language that mutually interpret each other, namely blessing and giving thanks, occur beside two traditions of mutually interpreting relationships to food, namely stories of abundance and sociality. As noted above, abundance figures in the feeding narratives of the Gospels. The other narrative context for the Eucharist is the banquet or symposia. In Luke’s Gospel, for example, the abundance of the feeding narratives and the sociality of the banquet come together as an image of the reign of God. The institution of the Eucharist becomes a moment of this reign, characterized by hospitality and sacrifice that is being-for-the-other, what Mark Brett describes as ‘a kenotic hospitality’.⁴⁴

If we experience ourselves as distant from the suffering of Earth others, Brett argues, we need to overcome that distance ‘through a “Eucharistic” catholicity that knits together the pain of the world’.⁴⁵ However, as Mary Grey argues, often the eucharistic ‘liturgy as we experience it does not convey the truth of [Earth’s] woundedness and the suffering of thousands of [creatures] many of which are threatened with extinction’.⁴⁶ For Grey we are at a ‘*kairos* moment’ when Eucharist can be rethought ethically and imaginatively, where human participants take up our vocation to creation. Grey calls for

43. David Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), p. 210; quoted in Mary Grey, ‘Cosmic Communion: A Contemporary Reflection on the Eucharistic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin’, *Ecotheology* 10, no. 2 (2005), p. 175.

44. Mark Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), p. 196.

45. Brett, *Decolonizing God*, p. 196.

46. Mary Grey, ‘Cosmic Communion: A Contemporary Reflection on the Eucharistic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin’, *Ecotheology* 10, no. 2 (2005), p. 177.

liturgy' as a place of ethical commitment of the gathered community to the brokenness of creation for which we are largely responsible'; for 'understanding sacrifice as a community act of solidarity with the suffering earth/suffering people'; for memory/anamnesis as 'remembering what we were once, what we have been, what can now never be, given so much destruction'; for 'the recovery of prophetic lament and grief for all that has disappeared, and the glory of God that can never be, because of what has been destroyed and what we are still destroying'; for repentance and 'reconversion to the earth'; for 'commitment and dedication to lifestyles geared to the flourishing and survival of threatened forms of life, human and non-human'.⁴⁷

This is a vocation to communion. The abundance of the Eucharist is inseparable from Jesus' self-giving, through which, by participating in Eucharist, 'we become one with others and share their fate'.⁴⁸ Such communion (which involves more than human others) is a vocation to communal sharing.⁴⁹ This vocation is a calling that arrives from the material blessing in which Eucharist subsists and which Eucharist brings into focus. As the sacrament of the being-for-the-other of the Earth community, Eucharist calls us forth, enabling us to be both Earth mystics and Earth activists. Despite the grief that accompanies our celebration of communion without communion, there is peace to be found in knowing and celebrating who we are as members of an Earth community that is already eucharistic, sustaining us and impelling us to live what we already are: *each one for the other*.

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47. Grey, 'Cosmic Communion', pp. 177–78.

48. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, pp. 94–95. See also, 1 Cor. 10.16.

49. Méndez Montoya, *The Theology of Food*, pp.155–56.

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