**[OT Prophetess](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/)** Musings of an OT professor on the Bible, Celtic spirituality, animal rights and theology, and whatever else comes to mind. (A Blog)

Saturday, July 14, 2007

**Why I Became a Vegetarian**

The stewing chicken pushed me over the edge.

I was deboning it for Chicken Tetrazzini, one of my all-time favorite meals. But as I stood at my kitchen counter pulling chicken legs apart, stripping the greasy meat off the bones, and stretching arteries until they snapped, I thought, "I can't do this anymore." The reality of this chicken's creatureliness overwhelmed me.

It's not like I somehow failed to realize that all the chickens before this one were, well, chickens. It's just that, up until this chicken, I had never thought of them as creatures. They were meat, packaged antiseptically in foam containers with plastic stretched over them. They didn't look like the *real* chickens you see on TV--with feathers and beaks and general all-around quirky cluckiness. No, what I was buying in the store, I had deluded myself, was meat, not a being.

But on this particular day three summers ago, the illusion was shattered. What I was shredding with my fleshly fingers had itself been flesh and bone, a living thing that was now dead. The thing lying before me was a corpse and I a cannibal.

From there, I began to do what I do best: research. I got on the Internet and began discovering other reasons for being a vegetarian. I visited the obvious websites first, such as PETA, where I watched a gruesome video called "Meet Your Meat." I never made it all the way through. What impacted me was that meat production involves horrendous suffering—suffering you don't see or realize exists as you carefully choose the lean hamburger at HEB.

Then, I turned to Christianity—were any vegetarians out there Christians? Or, did most people shy away from a lifestyle that is often associated with wild-haired, hippy liberals (well, that's what I had thought!). But, much to my amazement, I found a whole community of vegetarian Christians. And, after visiting several websites, I discovered a library of popular and academic works on vegetarianism and Christianity. I read everything I could get my hands on.

What I learned was that very thoughtful, even brilliant people, had come to the vegetarian lifestyle. Their reasons differed—some became vegetarians for ethical reasons, others for religious reasons, and still others for dietary reasons. What impressed me most, however, was that all of them acknowledged that animals are beings worthy of respect and concern.

My favorite writer on this issue is Andrew Linzey, an Anglican scholar who has written on the subject since the 1970s. His major premise is that while God's people are called to have dominion over all creation, dominion requires service and intervention for the powerless, not wholesale, tyrannical subjugation. I obviously can't summarize his entire argument here, so you'll just have to read his books. There's no one better at making the theological argument for vegetarianism than Linzey.

It seems such a futile gesture—becoming a vegetarian. I mean, how can one person refusing to eat meat change the suffering of billions of creatures? But, I consider it to be a worthwhile gesture. I view vegetarianism as a perpetual fast, a spiritual protest against cruelty and utilitarian use of other creatures for our pleasures. I see it as one small step toward the Peaceable Kingdom envisioned by the prophets and by Jesus himself (more on this another day).

So, the stewing chicken pushed me over the edge, but what I found on the other side was well worth it.

\*\*If you're interested in reading about Christianity and vegetarianism, go to my librarything site where I've posted most of my library.

Posted by [Susan Pigott](http://www.blogger.com/profile/09562487595337173857) at [5:07 PM](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/2007/07/why-i-became-vegetarian.html)

Labels: [animal ethics](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/search/label/animal%20ethics), [animal theology](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/search/label/animal%20theology), [vegetarianism](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/search/label/vegetarianism)

**2 comments:**



[Steve](http://www.blogger.com/profile/03260563791091215318) said...

This is a fantastic story...and I'm not even a vegetarian. I had a couple of heart surgeries this past spring, so I spent an extended amount of time in front of the television convalescing. During that time I ran across an episode of Oprah with a physician on there who specializes in digestive issues...I believe his name was Dr. Oz, but I might be wrong about that. At any rate, he talked about how difficult it is for your body to break down red meat, and I realized that, at the very least, I didn't want to do that to my body. My red meat intake has drastically decreased since then, and my appreciation of the vegetarian lifestyle and dishes has markedly increased.

Thanks for sharing your story!

[July 15, 2007 at 10:24 AM](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/2007/07/why-i-became-vegetarian.html?showComment=1184513040000#c5369970573924821347)



[Will](http://www.blogger.com/profile/14860124159479699282) said...

Hey Dr. P.

Might I have permission to put some of your concluding remarks as a quote on my Facebook page?

I imagine your "perpetual fast" must not be incredibly personal (or you wouldn't have put it on the internet), but I just thought I would ask before publicizing something that has to do with your spirituality.

Really enjoyed the story though.

[July 18, 2007 at 8:45 PM](http://otprophetess.blogspot.com/2007/07/why-i-became-vegetarian.html?showComment=1184809500000#c1043220310924688609)