

Abbot's Notes

Peace be with you.

Nutrition is key to health. Faulty nutrition, faulty health. Very few would argue with these generalizations. Perhaps only those who are committed "fast food" diners might react with fear of about to be attacked, rather than acquiesce to the truth already known that lurks behind ever seemingly delicious mouthfuls of trans fat. (More later on this topic.)

The word "nutrition" implies food, types of food, and so forth. "Food" we usually read to infer "body." If life was so easily digestible!

Let's mention as well nutrition for the mind and for the spirit. Within the unicity of being human we readily experience that we are more than just our body and more than just our mind and more than just our spirit. Who we are is that which can distinguish through experience these three facets. We are conscious of body-mind-spirit.

Obviously, nourishing one, nourishes the whole. If we eat an abundance of trans fatty foods, besides becoming fat, we may become mentally sluggish, and spiritually torpid. If we eat healthy food and watch more than 10 hours of TV per week, we may mental mentally hypnotized and spiritually commercialized and yet be on the obese side as well due to a sedentary life style. If we eat healthily, engage mental acuity, and ignore ourselves spiritually, we may lose our way.

How might we bring coherence to our nutritional living? Reflected from a book review regarding Benedictine spirituality we find that the essence of Benedictine Life is to nourish an attentive attitude. The key to the Rule of St. Benedict is *That in all*

things God may be gloried. This way, we break the delusion of the spiritual and material and attending illusions and allusions.

There is an old story about an abbot instructing novices wondering how to be solemn: *In chapel you should comport yourself as you do during recreation — relaxed. During recreation you should comport yourself as you do in chapel — with dignity.*

All of life, all aspects of life are sacramental. We are always in the presence of God. As such, we can exercise Bernard Longergan's, S.J. so-called "transcendental imperatives": *Be attentive! Be intelligent! Be reasonable! Be responsible! Be in love!*

How is this accomplished? Learning how to Listen is the basic "technique" of Benedictine spirituality — and the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict. One learns to begin what needs to be done, to carry out that function giving the task at-hand one's complete, quiet and dignified attention, being unconcerned about finishing the task — being relaxed with dignity.

Being relax about life and moving forward with dignity, we can nourish ourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually with equanimity, being peace. This means, being angry when angry in a relaxed and dignified way. This means being joyful in a relaxed and dignified way. This means being sorrowful in a relaxed and dignified way. This means being happy in a relaxed and dignified way. Being relaxed and dignified, we can let go of our cravings for trans fat; we don't need to dull our minds with intoxicants of any nature; we remain open and present to who we truly are. (see page 1, Column 4.)

Trans Fats

http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2003/503_fats.html

Scientific evidence shows that consumption of saturated fat, trans fat, and dietary cholesterol raises low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol, levels, which increases the risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health, more than 12.5 million Americans have CHD, and more than 500,000 die each year. That makes CHD one of the leading causes of death in the United States.

The Food and Drug Administration has required that saturated fat and dietary cholesterol be listed on food labels since 1993. Starting Jan. 1, 2006, listing of trans fat will be required as well. With trans fat added to the Nutrition Facts panel, you will know for the first time how much of all three--saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol--are in the foods you choose. Identifying saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol on the food label gives you information you need to make food choices that help reduce the risk of CHD. This revised label will be of particular interest to people concerned about high blood cholesterol and heart disease.

However, everyone

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

How to Avoid Trans Fats	2
Biblical Recipe Body/Soul	3
World of Love	6
Detaching a Belief	8

Special point of insight: www.6seconds.org

=====

.... whatever your spiritual beliefs, I hope you will join me in imagining a miracle:

What if all children, everywhere in the world, could end the year knowing they are loved and worthy of love? What would happen in the next generation?

What would happen to you and I?

I don't understand love, I don't know what it means or even where it comes from. I don't know why sometimes it hurts so much, or why sometimes we stop feeling it.

Maybe that's why it's so scary. So instead of analyzing it away, or reducing it to something we can quantify, I'd like to accept it as a miracle, a uniquely human grace, a kind of redemption, a promise.

In the spirit of miracles, I'd like every person, everywhere, no matter if he is afraid, no matter if she is lonely, to know that they can kindle a light of love. I'd like them to see that now is the (moment) of light returning, and we each are a part of it. I want them to know in their hearts -- I want you to know in yours -- that if we choose to make it so, each of us can be a candle burning bravely in the darkness.

With love,
- Josh

Abbot's Notes (Con't)

Not being relaxed or dignified might indicate a non-nourishing belief system being harbored. What do you believe about nutrition for body-mind-spirit? Perhaps getting rid of non-nourishing beliefs is a start (see address page)?

Nourish yourself well. Thank you. May many blessings be to you and yours.

Peace and Joy!
+Robert OSB

Trans Fats (con't)

(Continued from page 1)

should be aware of the risk posed by consuming too much saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol. But what is trans fat, and how can you limit the amount of this fat in your diet?

What is Trans Fat?

Basically, trans fat is made when manufacturers add hydrogen to vegetable oil--a process called hydrogenation. Hydrogenation increases the shelf life and flavor stability of foods containing these fats.

Trans fat can be found in vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, cookies, snack foods, and other foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils. Unlike other fats, the majority of trans fat is formed when food manufacturers turn liquid oils into solid fats like shortening and hard margarine. A small amount of trans fat is found naturally, primarily in dairy products, some meat, and other animal-based foods.

Trans fat, like saturated fat and dietary cholesterol, raises the LDL cholesterol that increases your risk for CHD. Americans consume on average 4 to 5 times as much saturated fat as trans fat in their diets.

Although saturated fat is the main dietary culprit that raises LDL, trans fat and dietary cholesterol also contribute significantly.

Are All Fats the Same?

Simply put: No. Fat is a major source of energy for the body and aids in the absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids. Both animal and plant-derived food products contain fat, and when eaten in moderation, fat is important for proper growth, development, and maintenance of good health. As a food ingredient, fat provides taste, consistency, and stability and helps you feel full. In addition, parents should be aware that fats are an especially important source of calories and nutrients for infants and toddlers (up to 2 years of age), who

have the highest energy needs per unit of body weight of any age group.

While unsaturated fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) are beneficial when consumed in moderation, saturated and trans fats are not. Saturated fat and trans fat raise LDL cholesterol levels in the blood. Dietary cholesterol also contributes to heart disease. Therefore, it is advisable to choose foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol as part of a healthful diet.

What Can You Do About Saturated Fat, Trans Fat, and Cholesterol?

When comparing foods, look at the Nutrition Facts panel, and choose the food with the lower amounts of saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol. Health experts recommend that you keep your intake of saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol as low as possible while consuming a nutritionally adequate diet. However, these experts recognize that eliminating these three components entirely from your diet is not practical because they are unavoidable in ordinary diets.

Major Food Sources of Trans Fat for American Adults:

40% Cookies, cakes, crackers, pies, bread
21% Animal Products
17% Margarine
08% Fried Potatoes
05% Potato/Corn Chips, Pop Corn
03% Salad Dressing
01% Breakfast Cereal
01% Candy

(Isn't it so that:
as we eat so we are.)

NOTICE Change of Address

To update s- and e- address,
please visit:
<http://www.wrmosb.org/update>

How to Avoid Trans Fats

http://www.cspinet.org/nah/6_99/transfat3.html

By Margo Wootan and Rachel Berger

....As a rule of thumb, think of any food with three or more grams of trans or sat fat as trouble. The less of both you eat, the better

1. Axe the appetizers. Remember when an appetizer meant shrimp cocktail, consommé, or other light fare to whet your appetite? Now it's more likely to crush it...and your chances of not moving up a size by next swimsuit season.

Take the ever-popular batter-dipped fried whole onion plus dipping sauce that's served at steak houses. It's not just an appetizer--it's a day's worth of calories (2,100) and trans fat (18 grams). Add in its saturated fat and you're talking about a three-day supply of arterial putty. So what if you split it with a friend? After 1,000 calories, you're supposed to dig in to a main course?

The cheese fries with ranch dressing at many steak houses are another marvel of modern face-stuffing. Their 11 grams of trans fat are bad enough. Add 81 grams of saturated fat and you wonder whether local health departments should require restaurants to have a defibrillator in case their patrons' tickers need a jump start. How many people would have to split this baby to get its 3,000 calories down to a reasonable level?

And so it goes. From stuffed potato skins to fried mozzarella sticks to Buffalo wings, the typical appetizer menu brings good business to fat farms and funeral parlors. Whether it starts out fatty (like the cheese sticks and chicken wings) or ends up that way (what with frying and dipping sauce), you end up with a load of trans (plus saturated) fat and calories.

2. Cultivate a fear of frying. At home, it's fine to sauté in a little canola or olive oil. At fast-food and

(Continued on page 3)

How to Avoid Trans Fats (con't)

(Continued from page 2)

mid-priced restaurants, many foods are fried in what starts out as a brick- or sludge-like shortening or margarine. And that means a hefty dose of trans.

Seafood restaurants are a good example. A typical order of fried clams or the fried seafood combo packs about 50 grams of fat, roughly ten of them trans and almost as many saturated. At chains like Red Lobster, fried shrimp, fried fish, fried anything means heart trouble.

And judging by the six to ten grams of trans fat in each order of onion rings or chicken fingers we tested, dinner-house or family-style chains like T.G.I. Friday's, Chili's, and Denny's apparently buy their shortening from the same distributors as seafood emporiums. Ditto for fast-food chains like KFC. Its Original Recipe Chicken Dinner has seven grams of trans, mostly from the chicken and biscuit.

Of course, one restaurant food probably delivers more trans fat to the nation's circulatory system than any other. French fries-sold just about everywhere but Starbucks and Barnes & Noble-deserve an award from the Cardiologists-in-the-Caribbean travel agency.

The most popular side dish in America delivers anywhere from four grams (McDonald's) to seven grams (Burger King) of trans fat to the arteries that keep your heart muscle moving. Even if the chains use liquid oil in the restaurants, they rely on hydrogenated fats to par-fry the taters before shipping.

You want fries? If you can handle the 410 calories in a "small," try the Boardwalk Fries sold in many shopping malls. Thanks to liquid (peanut) frying oil, you get no trans. But with nearly four grams of sat fat, you'll still need to split it with someone.

3. Don't make miscellaneous mistakes. Not all trans fat comes from

hydrogenated vegetable oil. Meat and milk have small amounts of naturally occurring trans. But "small" becomes substantial (seven grams) when you're ordering a 16-ounce prime rib.

A few others doozies to dodge: A chicken pot pie has six grams of trans (and 11 grams of sat fat) lurking in that innocent-looking pastry dough. And biscuits and gravy start your day with four grams of trans (plus ten grams of saturated).

4. Be picky with pastries. We've never understood how anyone could afford to munch on the 670 calories and 34 grams of fat in a Cinnabon. But if you watch the "chefs" smear those slabs of margarine on the dough, the six grams of trans and nine grams of sat fat should come as no surprise. Some snack.

Except for the Cinnabon and apple pie, each of the pastries we tested had "only" about three grams of trans. That's because they came from Mrs. Fields, Au Bon Pain, and other upscale bakers, which use more butter than margarine (that's no better). If the three grams of trans in a fudge brownie sundae served at dinner houses don't getcha, the (far worse) 27 grams of sat fat will. So watch out.

The Good News

Plenty of restaurant fare is nearly trans-free. But unless the chef invites you into the kitchen to inspect his or her cooking oils, your best bet is to order food that's low in all fats. For example:

* At most delis, get the turkey sandwich with mustard.

* At seafood restaurants, order broiled fish and a baked potato with a tablespoon of sour cream.

* Stuck at a dinner-house chain like Applebee's? Try the barbecue or grilled chicken breast. At McDonald's, order a Grilled Chicken Deluxe sandwich without the mayo.

* Pick lower-fat Chinese dishes like Szechuan shrimp or stir-fried vegetables. It's a good bet that the cook is using liquid oil. And if you steer clear of the beef, pork, and deep-fried ingredients, you won't get too much sat fat either.

* Most salads should be low in trans. But you can get a load of sat fat from the cheese and meat in a chef salad or from the sheer quantity of dressing in a chicken Caesar salad. Solution: Get fat-free or light dressing.

Margo Wootan is Senior Scientist for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Nutrition Action Healthletter's publisher. Rachel Berger helped compile the information for this article.

Just a Note!

**There are experiences.
Then there ARE experiences!
Meet Nature. Meet yourself.
Truly an experience of a life time!
How can you not?**

The White Robed Monks are coordinating a return trek to Mt. Everest Base Camp in March, 2006. For more information, please visit:
<http://www.wrmosb.org/banares>

(BTW, Why not India, too?)

Now just exercising the body with a gentle walk in a park, as in the Kumba Glacier National Park, would be a totally perfect way to nourish mind and spirit wouldn't it?
(see above, please)

Past Issues

Past issues of **Network News** are available in PDF format at
<http://www.wrmosb.org/archive>

http://www.tccsa.tc/articles/biblical_health.html

II. Nutrition for the soul: What God says about emotional and psychological health.

A. Can I find myself in the Bible stories and parables of Jesus?

In the prescriptions and guides for everyday life? Here are lessons to clarify, to help and heal the problems and pains life can bring. Wisdom to see us through the most difficult times. Bible stories and Bible symbols express the universal pain, longings, regrets and broken resolutions we all share. Hidden inner parts of ourselves are revealed as we find ourselves in these Bible lessons. God is the potter, we are the clay.

1. Matthew 7:1-4 - Coming to terms with my own faults and my own emotional pain. Jesus is giving ethical advice and at a deeper level, healing counsel. The faults I see in someone else are often a reflection of my own troubles. The "log" in my eye can be projected onto another person magnifying his faults.

a. He directs my attention back to myself. I may be projecting my emotions and attitudes onto the world. Owning my "log" is the beginning of my own healing.
b. I have power to change my own inner thought life. The Bible promises me inner peace and joy.
c. Projecting my inner joy onto others will bring my own healing.

2. Matthew 18:7-9 - What to do when I miss the mark (sin).

a. Temptation comes to all of us: we all make mistakes, we are all limited.
b. Jesus uses vivid symbols: dealing with our mistakes and sins is one of our most painful tasks.
c. Deceit and dishonesty: our first impulse is to deny our mistakes and pretend to ourselves and others. A life based on habitual deceit can lead to a living "hell" on earth as the lies compound one upon another. Indeed, I am capable of all kinds of

mistakes and sins.

d. Jesus gives healing wisdom: In vivid symbols, He tells us to admit to ourselves and to others as soon as possible that we made a wrong choice. May be painful at first, but a wave of relief and elation will follow.

3. Luke 6:27-31 - The highest stage of personal growth. The world is a tough, unfair place: Is this scripture workable?

a. Jesus shows us how to achieve personal power through personal and spiritual growth.
b. We are to have inner strength to see beyond the evil act to the person who is in such pain that it seems he can only relate to others in a harmful way.
c. When we no longer have to prove anything to ourselves or others, we will have the emotional strength and courage to reach out rather than react.
d. Our soul is renewed and made healthy as we grow into the loving care of our Creator and Redeemer God by choosing to do acts of kindness to those who abuse us.

4. Matthew 26:36-41 - Is it possible to accept unavoidable suffering and find meaning in it? Periods of darkness and suffering are inevitable parts of our lives.

a. Jesus was about to enter the darkest part of His short life on earth. His mission could not be accomplished without personal pain and sacrifice.
b. For the first time, the disciples saw the sorrow and troubled heart of Jesus. They had depended on Jesus as a source of strength and counsel. Now, He asks them to sit, wait and watch. Jesus must meet His fate alone and so must they. He tells them three times to be strengthened by watching and praying.
c. Jesus asks to avoid unnecessary pain, but shows His determination to do what must be done. The disciples fell asleep - retreating into unconsciousness.
d. A failure of courage and a lost opportunity to be with Him making the inevitable pain meaningful. Later, they ran away.
e. After a time, the disciples did accept their mission. Through the res-

urrection, their faith was restored. In later years, they faced personal tragedy and pain with Christ-like calm.

f. If we can find significance in suffering, the pain becomes worth something for ourselves and others.

5. Mark 11:15-26 - Are there ways my anger could benefit others?

a. At times, anger is necessary and right. Anger must be used in combination with the spiritual elements of faith and forgiveness. Faith combined with anger can "move mountains."

If I get angry and express it, will it help someone?

Is this anger a healing anger? If it is, the anger is good anger.

b. Forgiveness is a necessary part of good anger. Once our good anger is acknowledged and then expressed in a constructive manner, forgiveness must follow.

c. Prayerful expression of anger (done in faith) followed by the commitment to forgive brings our anger under control.

d. Anger can be the source of a wonderful energy for changing yourself and wrongful life situations.

6. Matthew 26: 26-29 - How can I deal with my fear of death?

a. Fear of death is natural. Near death experiences, death of loved ones and our own advancing age increases awareness.

b. The prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was filled with sorrow and anxiety. But Jesus is not overwhelmed.

c. Jesus gave a therapeutic gift to the disciples to help them with their own anxiety about His pending death. The gift of communion contains a powerful message.

d. The way to deal with the fear of death is to celebrate life with those we love. Celebration does not deny our fears about death. It acknowledges them and joy is found in spite of them.

There are many ways to reach out in love to those we care about...

7. John 16:20-22 - How joy can help overcome sorrow and sadness.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

a. The metaphor of childbirth: sorrow is like the pain of child birth.

b. Pain and sorrow are a necessary part of life (of giving life).

c. Sorrow will disappear naturally if we let it go. The progress from sorrow to joy is natural. Positive feelings will come in time. New joy needs space in our hearts.

d. Overwhelming grief and sadness of today will be forgotten - pushed from the center of memory - as new joy begins to move in. Take joy at every opportunity the Lord gives...

8. Mark 7:20-23 - How to face my "inner demons."

a. The Bible talks about outward temptations that come as part of life and promises strength to endure them and assures us that victory is more than worth the battle. Jesus spent time in the desert confronting the temptations of evil.

b. Nothing in the world can defile us. The problems come from within. God sees the darkness inside far more clearly than I do. He loves me in spite of it.

c. Evil only holds power over us if we hide it away and run from it. Once I acknowledge my own "defilements" facing my faults head-on, their power is broken.

d. The door of our soul opens to receive the forgiveness of God that was there all along.

9. Luke 9:46-48 - How can I stop comparing myself to others?

Conflict, unhappiness, misery result from comparisons with others. The disciples were judging their personal success and worth by seeking to be the "greatest."

Finding our value by seeking superiority over others can have devastating consequences. It is an imaginary contest that can't be won. Our self-worth is not dependent on outward circumstances.

Jesus gives a paradoxical and surprising answer. **The road to salvation and health for our soul lies in the childlike quality of our inner being.** (Emphasis Ed.)

Welcoming and receiving little children as they are means bringing out the childlike qualities in ourselves.

b. Jesus says that the least among you is the one who is great.

Seeing the world like a child: full of wonder and awe; seeing goodness and evil in others directly not by comparing; being true to self.

c. Giving up the "chase" frees the soul from stress and anxiety and the fear of being outdone.

The truly wonderful moments are found in loving relationships, serving others and in seeing God's gifts in creation. Being the "least" allows us to feel great.

10. John 8:31-32 - Seeking God's truth is a sign of a healthy, growing faith.

a. The Psalmist, David, said to the Lord: "I believe, help thou my unbelief." Life presents continual questions and challenges to our faith. See them as an invitation to grow, to find new meaning and a deeper understanding of our faith and of ourselves.

b. Accepting the invitation benefits the health of our soul. Jesus was always ready to debate with the scholars and religious experts in public, but did not always convince them.

c. Our faith does not depend on convincing others, but depends upon our resolve to find the truth.

This includes being open to criticism and challenge.

d. When we experience doubt, it is a signal that we are about to discover more of God's truth in His word.

Clergy E-Addresses

P. Rick Adams (Portland OR)
rwadams4@msn.com

P. Bud Andre (Half Moon Bay CA)
eandresandpiper@aol.com

P. Brooks Anderson OSB (Crescent City CA)
bbanders@charter.net

P. Jim Balijs (Chicago IL)
fatherjim@stjohn-wrb-mission.org

P. Gerry Caprio (Mill Valley CA)
geraldcaprio@hotmail.com

B. Larry Cameron* (Monroe MI)
pilgrimucc@toledolink.com

P. Ariosto Coelho (San Bruno CA)
AriostoCoelho@yahoo.com

AB Robert Dittler OSB
abbot@whiterobedmonks.org

P. Tom Dowling* (San Francisco CA)
tfxdowling@sbcglobal.net

P. Stephev Duffy* (Long Branch NJ)

stephenduffy@peoplepc.com
P. Bob Ebert (Tucson AZ)

wetdogpaws@yahoo.com
P. Allen Elder (Firestone CO)

stamonastery@msn.com
P. Jerry Farrell* (Grass Valley CA)
SanFranIRL@aol.com

P. Josh Favalora* (Salinas CA)
frjosh@redshift.com

P. Roger Fawcett* (New York NY)
rfawcett@skadden.com

B. Grant Fleming (Lakewood CO)
gfleming@regis.edu

P. Ricardo Frances So. San Fran. CA)
ricardo@elbuenpastor.net

P. Philip Freneau (Crescent City CA)
ppaaxx@aol.com

P. Charles Frey (Urbandale IA)
llumin8me7306@aol.com

P. David Fryer (Fleetwood PA)
david@pegasusforge.com

P. Greg Geis OPR* (Houston TX)
brainlocked@prodigy.net

P. Mark Ginzo (Miami Lakes FL)
yumuri94@hotmail.com

B. Charles Grande* (Penn Valley CA)
charlesraphael@direcway.com

P. Ron Hayes (Augusta ME)
jurnyin@msn.com

B. Jack Holeman NOSB* (Spring TX)
jackholman@juno.com

D. Jimmy Johnson Hickory NC)
JimJohnson28603@hotmail.com

P. Jim Johnson (Mineral Point WI)
JohnsonJ@mhctc.net

P. Peter Lanzillotta (Minnetonka MN)
revpel@mindspring.com

P. John Mabry* (Berkeley CA)
jmabry@apocryphile.org

P. Terry Madden (Aberdeen WA)
temadden@doc1.wa.gov

P. Richard Mapplebeckpalmer* (Martinez CA)
richard@mapplebeckpalmer.com

P. Concey Mesquita (Morton Grove IL)
FatherConcey@StJohn-WRB-Mission.org

D. Diane Miles (San Francisco CA)
drmmiles@sbcglobal.net

P. Ray Rau (Grand Rapids MI)
cliffordrau@comcast.net

P. Milton Raybould (Houston TX)
mmraybould@aol.com

P. William Schillereff (Taylorsville UT)
skyridder@netscape.com

P. Skip Sikora (Fairfax CA)
SkipSik@aol.com

D. Donna Stoneham (Point Richmond CA)
SOARE@aol.com

P. Richard Whelan-Stevens* (San Pablo CA)
rwhelanstevens@earthlink.net

P. Kevin Yell* (Oakland CA)
yellout@juno.com

P. Mark Ziolkowski (Denver CO)
zmarzipanz@comcast.net

**denotes Licensed Cleric, cleric incardinated in another Catholic Jurisdiction.*

All other clerics are incardinated within the Catholic Jurisdiction known as White Robed Monks of St. Benedict.

A WORLD OF LOVE ... AND HOW TO GET THERE by Vern Ross

from <http://www.bridges-across.org/wol/sess11.htm>

... the love with which we love should be so pure, so simple, so detached that it inclines neither to myself nor to my friend nor to anything else next to it. The teachers say that one can name no good work as a good work and no virtue as a virtue unless it has taken place in love. ... How has God loved us? He loved us when we did not yet exist and when we were his enemies. So great a need had God for our friendship that he could not wait until we asked him. ... It should be an equally serious matter with us to pray for those who do us harm. Why? So that we might fulfill God's will, that we should not wait until someone asks us. ... So unitary should our love be, for love will never be anywhere else than there where equality and unity are. Between a master and a servant there is no peace because there is no real equality. ... when God is in me and I am in God, then I am not less and God is not higher. -Meister Eckhardt

Agape conquers the ambiguities of love, spiritual power conquers the ambiguities of power, grace conquers the ambiguities of justice. - Paul Tillich

A theology of the Omega Point and for the age of the Spirit requires that we define and interpret God's agape clearly and correctly.

I have been struggling with the meaning of love and loves since fifty years ago as a sophomore in college I was reading a sermon by the Unitarian preacher, Jefferson, on love. I arrived then at the dilemma of a lifetime: If I do not love others (and I didn't think I did) then how can I MAKE myself love?

When we struggle with the meaning of love we are pushed to the center of the most important issues facing humanity. Bound up in the question of the relation of the divine love (agape) to the various forms of needy human loves (eros) are the most important questions of life: How does God's love come to us and how does it relate to our flawed forms of love? What is worth loving ultimately? What is healthy love, wholistic love, and how does one become able to give and receive it? ...

This unity of opposites in a new and higher synthesis is a working definition and picture of the structure of God's kind of love. This is what it looks like in human beings. Each of these dimensions of the two polarities represents a power effect of the kind of self which is organized around agape. Such a self holds to-

gether strongly; it is universal in the scope of its concerns; it has power to stand alone against the whole world; and it relates selflessly and compassionately to others in community.

Meister Eckhardt

Read again the quotes above from a sermon of 14th century mystic, theologian and preacher, Meister Eckhardt. It would be hard to find a better definition within two pages of agape.

Agape is a love which originates with God's overflow of creativity and desire for companionship in creative play. ... It is a love which demands of us the same unconditional giving, even to the extent of requiring that we seek out, forgive and love our enemies.

It is, moreover, a love which is based upon equality with all others and upon unity with them, an equality and unity, Eckhardt suggests, which anticipates and is necessary to our equality and unity with God. It is, moreover, an equality and unity symbolized by the relationship in the ideal marriage, within which two people become one and yet at the same time are enabled to preserve all the richness and uniqueness of their individuality: "A wife and a husband are not alike, but in love they are equal."

He goes on to say that while they are united to one another, their unique centeredness is the power that prevents the being of one becoming lost in the other.

It is unfortunate that the translator of Eckhardt used the word "need" to describe God's desire for us and our love. Need indicates a lack, while God's love is a desire arising out of the divine inner nature as overflowing, loving creativity. This is a far cry from need as we use the word.

What is necessary for us to become such a being that we can stand on some basis of equality with God? Eckhardt implies that God's own grace confers such power of being. Through it we come to possess a new and powerful inner being able to knit up all four dimensions of the polarities which split us into pieces and defeat all our good intentions.

As the polarities are transcended and united in a new and higher kind of being, we become so strong that we can stand alone, as God does. We are so strong that we can give ourselves over to

other people in empathy and compassionate caring, as God does, and not lose be submerged in them. We are so strong that we can embrace all the world's people and the cosmos in a circle of concern, as God does, without flying apart. And finally, we are so strong that we are able to be centered and unified within, as God is, without losing either our capacity to embrace the universe or to enter into costly and delightful communion with individuals.

Again, to become like God does not mean that we have all knowledge and power. It means we become the wholistic pattern of the Divine One. We do not become God; we become like God in the power that symmetry brings to our inner being. It is like the strength of a geodesic dome, where every strut of the structure is supported in place by all the others.

This does not come about by our striving but by the gift of God through other people.

Love and Power

Note that all four of the characteristics of the healthy self described above are forms of power. The ability to love rests on the possession of what is often called power of being. This is power simultaneously in all the four dimensions of our basic polarities (freedom, relatedness, expansion, integrity).

The corollary is also true. All of the evil in us, characterized by envy, hate, lust, anxiety, and the like, arises from a lack of such power of being.

Agape is a Kind of Being

Agape is not a feeling, though feeling is involved. It is not a response to the command to love, an act of will, though we are commanded to do our best to act toward others and ourselves in terms of agape. Agape is a kind of being; it is someone we become; it is an ontological reality. It can spring only from the divine root. Jesus asks if figs can come from thistles, and at another point whether good fruit can come from an evil tree. In the Gospel of John, he suggests that only if we abide in him, in God through him, do we bear fruit. Only then are we attached to the root containing the healthy sap. Only then are we suckling at the divine breast. These are passages which underline the ontological nature of the divine love; it appears where it becomes incarnate in a self or self-system, or it does not appear at all.

(Continued on page 7)

A WORLD OF LOVE ... AND HOW TO GET THERE (con't)

(Continued from page 6)

In short, this kind of love is incarnate purely in our god-self; it does not appear in any of the other self-systems. When it appears in our immature lives it is by a momentary breakthrough out of the god-self.

So many of our good deeds are done from motives other than agape: to fend off punishment, as a child does at Kohlberg's stage 1; to get praise, as child does at stages 2 and 3; to gain approval or praise from people in authority, as stage 4 people do all the time; or as stage 4 or 5 people do we may perform a good deed because we think we ought to.

All of these fall under Paul's starkly realistic critique: Even if we should give our bodies to be burned and have not agape we are nothing.

The motive force for all of these good deeds performed at the lower stages is need in some form. Agape, on the other hand, is an overflow out of abundant power, adequacy. Acts arising from need, to fill some emptiness, to assuage our anxiety, are not from agape; they do not arise from "that of God in us."

These needy acts arise from a form of love called eros.

Agape and Eros

... Paul Tillich listed four kinds of love, from the highest to the lowest:

- agape (God's kind of love)
- philia (love of friends)
- eros (upward striving for the reunification of what is separated)
- epithymia (lust)

Tillich taught that these loves are more or less on a continuum from lowest to highest.

Eros received its classic definition in Plato, where it described the ascent of the soul, drawn like a magnet toward reunification with Absolute Being. For the Neoplatonists, who influenced much subsequent theology, this means an inner drive for reunification with God.

There is another use of eros, different from this, which must be mentioned. Eros is seen as a rich, creative, sensuous and interpersonal affective power. In contrast, agape is portrayed as a rather austere, objective and inhuman kind of feeling and action. This is not the distinction I am making.

Other writers, like Matthew Fox, cele-

brate eros and the erotic in opposition to a kind of Christian faith which depreciates the body, the sensuous, sexual and the aesthetic. I am in agreement with Fox on this. But I am making a different distinction, that of need love verses overflow love. Within the wholeness of agape nothing sensuous or erotic is lost. If anything, there is more of the sensuous, sexual and aesthetic in people controlled by agape, and certainly such experiences are enjoyed more to the extent such personality implies freedom from guilt, shame and anxiety.

... (These people function from) that innermost temple of the spirit, the god-self. There is a healthy center in us which is capable of altruism, of genuinely unselfish caring.

Grace operates in the love, health, wholeness, joy and trust which we give to one another. God uses us as the primary agents of love. This can be done because of the reality of the god-self which often communicates directly to the god-selves of others in spite of the dissonance and obstruction of the demonic self-systems.

This understanding renders a great deal of the debate about agape and eros irrelevant. There is no masochistic self-sacrifice by the god-self, but a celebration and rejoicing in giving and receiving. One cannot distinguish between self-affirmation and self-giving when speaking of God's action or the emotional responses of the god-self. They are one and the same. An enlightened view, Williams suggests, sees that my good is also your good and that seeking the one I also seek the other. Giving and receiving are the breathing out and breathing in of the god-self. It is only in the fragmented life of the demonic self-systems that self-giving becomes self-destructive and self-affirmation is expressed in the form of selfishness. ...

It is the wholistic power of agape which enables it to transcend, purify, and reunite all the lower, needful forms of love. It is agape which unifies the four dimensions of our two basic polarities of life. It is agape which draws up the lower forms of love into itself, harvests all their value and spits out their evil, just as each higher stage, when entered smoothly and fully, harvests all the value from the lower stages, taking it into itself and uniting it to the new in a higher synthesis.

I Corinthians 13

The word agape should always be loaded with its full ontological weight, as

Paul did in I Corinthians 13. There he separated agape from all needy forms of love, and equated it with the inner reality and wholeness of the new being in Christ. When agape is defined only as self-giving and self-surrender (as Father D'Arcy tended to do in *The Mind and Heart of Love*) then it is again made half of a wholistic love. Self-giving is only one movement of agape. Without the other three forms of power --- inner integrity, cosmic content and perspective, and assurance of individual uniqueness -- giving oneself to others becomes throwing oneself away, a nihilistic act of self-abandonment.

Agape and Stage Development

Knowledge, achievement, aesthetic creation and enjoyment, service to others -- all of these express more than just narrow self-seeking. They begin to reflect the creative drive of God. Insofar as they arise from needy eros they reveal a still strangled form of creativity and enjoyment. But this is an important and necessary stage on the way. ...

Is Altruism Possible?

...Agape is present with some power in all of us from the earliest days. ...

Every decision of our will and every act we perform has a complex cord of motivation. In any such act, several of our demonic self-systems may rally to support out of quite different motivations. If it is a decision or act compatible with agape, then the god-self also supports the cause with its own kind of motivation. Motivation is like a cord woven of separate strands. One of the strands, to use poetic license, is agape red. It may be thin, but it is there.

(Remember)... all of us are a community of people inside and also in relationships where our self-systems overlap with others in real time.

The Push of Eros and the Pull of Agape

It means the knitting up of the basic polarities of life into a healthy wholeness which overcomes evil and death. It delivers us into loving communion with our own selves, with God and with others through the unifying power of the four-walled god-self. ...

Needy eros pushes us from behind and over-flowing agape draws from within and beyond. We then are drawn only by the pull of the gravity of God's love within us. ... We sense we are falling into light, warmth and loving acceptance.

**White Robed Monks
of St. Benedict**

PO Box 27536
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

Phone: 415-292-3228
E-mail: porter@whiterobedmonks.org

www.whiterobedmonks.org

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
PERMIT No. 10

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Moving or recently moved?
Please visit
<http://www.wrmosb.org/update>
Thank you.




Peace and Joy!

How to Detach from a Belief—Why?

How to detach from a belief and experience freedom and peace of mind? Use a centering meditation taught by Tarthang Tulku in his *Hidden Mind of Freedom*:

"Working with thoughts (beliefs) by opening them as they arise can bring many pleasant feelings, which—without attachment—also become our meditation. We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, embracing this judging mind, become united with it."

"By relying on the light of awareness you can see that the difficulties you face are manifestations of your own concepts. Going deeply into your thoughts, you will see how you create your experience, how you alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell, good and bad."

"Whatever experience arises, stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If you remain within the intense

core of the experience, the meditator unites with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves. Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being. . . ."

And why?

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed. (Thank you Michael Butler)

May all beings be happy.
Amen.

Peace. **Please!** offer support for our activities and/or help us cover printing and mailing costs for this newsletter by making :



OR please visit our home page
www.whiterobedmonks.org, click
"About Making a Donation"

OR if by check (WRB), mail to:
White Robed Monks of St. Benedict
Post Office Box 27536
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

And thank you. May many blessings be to you and yours now and forevermore. Peace and joy!

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict