

DEVOTIONAL METABOLISM

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Devotional Metabolism

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Procession of Doctrine

by

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*Devotional Metabolism

Devotion may be called "spiritual metabolism." On Wednesday we pointed out the position that devotion holds in the life of a candidate for truth. One of the **qualifications demanded in candidacy is renunciation, and one of the effects of renunciation is devotion.

Today we are going to speak about this very important process in the religious organism, and we start by distinguishing between what is called an "organization," and a "spiritual organism." By "organization" is meant an arrangement or combination of independent parts grouped together for a specific purpose, while an "organism" has life in itself. Therefore spiritual instruction, spiritual doctrine, Christian religion, is in itself a living organism.

*(Class lecture, July 17, 1953)

**Vide Notes and Headings of the Seventy-two Aphorisms, by George Edwin Burnell, page 10

We have authority for this statement in the words of Paul, who is said to be the apostle for all generations. He speaks of the body of the faithful as being the Lord's Body, the Corpus Christi.

Each year we consider these points as they reappear in the liturgical cycle. During the month of June we meditate on the Sacred Heart, and in July, on the Precious Blood. Each year we have a deeper, clearer perception of what this spiritual organism is, and we have lifted our understanding by means of studying particular factors in this organism, the Corpus Christi.

The Corpus Christi is the whole body, which is a complete, perfect, living organism. When we try to organize by human methods, we may have an arrangement of parts; but unless there is the breath of life, we have only something inanimate on our hands, not something that is living and vital.

In June we considered the Sacred Heart and began to realize something of the condescension of divine Love. This Heart now symbolizes

to us that place where infinite, omnipotent, supreme Love meets and takes up human love, even in the form of a heart that becomes sacred because it is assumed by the Lord Himself.

Then during the month of July we consider that vital fluid flowing through this Sacred Heart—the fluid that is called the “Instrument of Redemption”—the Precious Blood with its energy-giving, life-giving power.

Today we are going to point out, particularly, the importance of what is called devotion—devotion to the Precious Blood—and we speak of this devotion, this fire of spiritual action, figuratively, as the metabolism of the sacred humanity; devotion, spiritual heat.

Of course, materially and scientifically we cannot examine the works of God which pertain to the mystery of His grace; but for the specific purpose of arriving at perception, we are permitted to offer an analogy, comparing spiritual truth with material, human, scientific fact. To do this we use the example of metabolism in the human body, which is an energy-yielding process within the body itself. Metab-

olism has two particular, simultaneous operations; and we use it in relation to this consideration of the Precious Blood because that vital blood stream has also two particular operations. If, in a course in biology, you should study the action of the blood, you would be informed that the blood carries food to the cells. Blood is a very complex substance—this vital fluid that flows through our veins and arteries. The veins carry waste products, which, of course, are eliminated; but after performing this action, the veins carry the blood back through the heart for purification. The Sacred Heart or your heart or any heart is a constant purifier. The blood performs two actions simultaneously: it carries food to the cells; and then, because the cells are constantly washed with blood, it carries away the waste material.

If we are permitted to use religious terms and biological terms without confusing them, we could say that, biologically, metabolism has to do with transubstantiation in the human system—in your own physical cells. In religious terms “transubstantiation” is a devo-

tional mystery.

Science cannot explain the mystery of transubstantiation. But the physicists themselves have removed the last obstacle that stands in the way of the mind's acceptance of this miracle, because it has been acknowledged by the greatest physicists the world has developed, that there is no matter—that even the word “matter” is obsolete. Therefore, there is no dividing line between matter and spirit, although it will continue to appear to be there, just as the horizon line between earth and sky appears very clear and sharp, but is nowhere to be found.

Metabolism in a person's system has two actions. Remember that metabolism is an energy-yielding process, essential, absolutely essential to life.

We are trying, through analogy, to make clear the point that devotion, which is spiritual metabolism, is absolutely essential to your spiritual life. You can have no vital spiritual life unless you have devotion. It is the energy-yielding process of your religion; and,

in fact, Saint Thomas Aquinas, in considering the greatest moral virtue, which is religion, calls devotion a very special act of religion. In other words, there cannot be any religion without devotion because religion is not merely an external ritual; it is something that takes place within; it is something that belongs to your blood stream and kindles in you spiritual desire.

In the consideration of the sacraments, we have become acquainted with the use that the Lord has made of these natural faculties in man. He has put these natural faculties to special use, for He has said, *"Blessed are they [who] hunger and thirst [after truth] after righteousness." In our hunger and thirst, in our desire, He planted the capacity to be fed; and He has promised that we shall be fed. The whole process of transubstantiation has been permitted to rest upon man's hunger and thirst, upon man's desire.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, in speaking of the powerful activity of spiritual eating, which is

*St. Matthew 5:6

the Eucharistic action, says that we are not even obliged to partake corporeally of any kind of food.

When we desire food in the physical or corporeal plane, in the natural state, we do have actually to eat the food that, through the process of digestion, is carried to the cells. One of the processes of metabolism is that it transfers or transubstantiates the material food into living cells.

The metabolism of devotion is particularly powerful when it is devotion to the Precious Blood; because we are caught up by that devotion into the universal devotional blood stream, into the redeeming, vital blood stream of the Lord Himself.

In physical eating, which is an act of desire, an act of hunger and thirst, our metabolism changes the so-called "dead" food into living cells. But in spiritual eating this process is turned around. Instead of our reducing this spiritual action to our own immediate physical needs, to our own corporeal flesh, the whole process of digestion is reversed; and by our

desire, by our devotion to the Word of God, we are lifted up and assimilated into the divine Body. Instead of bringing His Body down to our own level, we are lifted up because He has assumed humanity. We do not bring truth down and modify it by our own limitations; but we, by our devotion, get aboard and participate in this religious circulatory system. We are lifted up by this devotion to free ourselves from our limitations. We are lifted up to be one with Truth Himself, and that is the healing of all our evils.

We have used the term "devotional metabolism" to indicate this spiritual, kindling process—spiritual metabolism, an energy-yielding process—for there is no vital, lively religion that has not devotion. We can have dead, matter-of-fact metaphysics, for even this has its use in arriving at understanding; but understanding is not enough; it must come to life somewhere, and it comes to life by means of devotion. Devotion does not exclude rationality (which is metaphysical)—nothing is excluded. But it is as though all these means to

the end, these factors that contribute, are united in one vital action. Then we begin to live, not as our fractional selves, but as Jesus Christ Who has lifted us up that we may live in Him.

We are invited to a consideration today regarding this mentality demanded in spiritual candidacy—the energy-yielding power of devotion. There can be no true religion, says Saint Thomas, without devotion. It is by our response with our devotion that this power of divine love assimilates and lifts us up to God. Religion means binding ourselves to God. We cannot bind ourselves to God without devotion because religion is not only an external act, but an internal one as well; and devotion is something that takes place within oneself. So we offer you again this analogy from the chapter on devotion in Saint Thomas Aquinas' "Treatise on Religion."

We have been speaking of the physical factors of your own body, lifting these up to be examples and illustrations—imperfect as they may seem to be—of participation in this circle of the mystical Body, of the body of the faith-

ful, and pointing out the opportunity available to every candidate to participate in this vital life.

*Bodily fatness is produced by the natural heat in the process of digestion . . .

In biological terms this natural heat in the body is called "metabolism"; and the more this heat is intensified, the quicker the transubstantiation takes place.

When you "eat" the Word of Truth, you do not digest it into yourself and bring it down to your own limitations. As you desire and spiritually participate in this Word (which is much greater than you, as an individual, are), it catches you up to participation in a divine devotion. By that intensification of the heat of your own devotion participating in a divine devotion, you are caught into this vital blood stream of redemption, of salvation—the healing blood stream. Then you yourself are assimilated. The more devotion, the more intensified is this action and the quicker the realization.

*The "Summa Theologica" of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume 11, page 25

We are going to speak about that in a moment.

Bodily fatness is produced by the natural heat in the process of digestion, and at the same time the natural heat lives, as it were on this fatness.

There is a wonderful compatibility between love and devotion; you cannot separate the two. Devotion seems to be the act of love, but where does the devotion come from? It comes from love. And where does devotion go to? It goes back into love, and it makes a wonderful spiritual circle. This spiritual cycle is going on within each person. It is called a spiritual evolution, as it were, out of one's ego-consciousness into his pure and true Self-consciousness. He may seem to die to certain conditions; these are burned up and carried away by what is called the "waste" in the penitential action.

In this process of metabolism there are two factors: a constructive process called "anabolism," which transfers or changes the substance of food into the vital cells and becomes the energy-yielding power; and there is also the

opposite of this process, called "katabolism," which breaks down the cells and carries away waste material, the things that ought not to be.

This double process also is going on constantly in the sacraments of the religious cycle. The sacraments have their very definite constructive action; but there is also, pervading all of these sacramental actions, the consuming, penitential action, carrying away all that ought not to be. Each sacrament builds up what ought to be and at the same time carries away what ought not to be. This double action goes on in a continuous evolutionary cycle within each individual person, within the world as a whole, and within the complete religious cycle. It is a continuous action; or, we might more correctly say, an eternal, spiritual action going on in the physical world.

If we do not constantly resort to reason, we may become caught in one side or the other of the action. Too much emphasis, perhaps, is placed upon katabolism, the carrying away of the waste materials, the sloughing off of this or that. We focus our attention on one

or the other and are caught among the six mortal changes; we think we are caught in the trap of death—beginning to die, growing old, and sloughing off. This evolutionary process is going on constantly, and if you could see the whole, you would see that out of all apparent dissolution (even out of this that appears to be death), there comes also life. This cycle is continuous from death to life, even as we have seen and have studied in the life of the Lord Who has projected the complete cycle for our observation, from death to life—not from life to death, but from death to life! It is the elimination of all that ought not to be, in order that all that ought to be may be seen to be all there is. Thus what ought to be is substantiated by truth. This is the life-giving circle that is continuous within this Precious Blood.

You cannot escape it. You are caught into it whether you know it or not. You cannot possibly escape because you are part of it. But when you have roused in yourself this spiritual devotion, this metabolism that is the heat of

your own devotion, you will begin to recognize and experience this action that is continuous and that has caught you up into the mystical Body.

Bodily fatness is produced by the natural heat in the process of digestion, and at the same time the natural heat lives, as it were, on this fatness. In like manner charity causes devotion, inasmuch as love makes one ready to serve one's friend, and at the same time charity feeds on devotion.

And so is this magic, miraculous circle protected and preserved by love and devotion. The love, the charity, is signified by the Sacred Heart, the devotional act; the circulating blood stream, we have likened to the Precious Blood. While these two are distinct, they are not in any way opposed because they act together harmoniously and compatibly—the Sacred Heart and the Precious Blood—to become for us an energy-yielding power.

As we have tried to remind you all the way through these lessons, spiritual instruction is not a method, but a message. Therefore, actually it is not that you have to employ any

method in order to become a participant in this vital energy, this precious blood stream; but you do have your part to do: you must, through instruction, awaken to an awareness of the truth. And yet even this much participation seems to bring up problems. For example, a person may ask, "How can I obtain the realization of the presence of this energy-yielding, vital fluid? How can I obtain the realization that I am participating in this spiritual action?"

In order to answer, we must put another question so that we may define our terms and be certain we are speaking of the same thing. If you ask this question, "How can I attain to the realization of this spiritual action?"—if you ask it of yourself or of someone else, you must define your terms—what do you mean by "I"? What does this word "I" signify to you? Does it mean your personal ego? If it does, your question has no answer, for realization of spiritual truth does not come to the personal ego. The ego itself has no capacity, no power of realizing this mystical Body. There

is nothing in the ego that permits this realization; and if a person is trying to realize this vital blood stream by his ego-consciousness, he finds himself frustrated.

When you say, "How can I attain this realization of vital union with the stream?" perhaps you mean the Self, the true Self. Perhaps you have been able to eliminate that false identification with the personal ego. Perhaps you have been able to strip off from your principle of identification all these false ideas, all this waste material, all these things that ought not to be. Perhaps you have gone through that process of elimination called "axiomatic training"; perhaps you have stripped off from yourself all this sense of false identity and all the pride and all the conceit and all that goes with it—and all the presumption. Perhaps you have stripped that off so that you have stood in the place of nothingness; and so, perhaps when you say "I," you mean the true Self. Let us suppose that this is what you mean. Again we find that there is no need to answer the question, "How can I attain the realization of

this vital union with the stream?"—for the Self does not need realization.

The great problem is to by-pass the tricky, human mind. In trying mentally to realize something, the more one tries to realize, the more sure he is that he has to realize something that he does not already know nor see. This means that he has to employ a method; so he resorts to all kinds of devices to try to attain realization, and the result is that he is more and more convinced that he does not now realize truth. This leaves us in an apparent *impasse*.

The True Self does not need to realize. The authority of Being belongs to this true Self, and it does not need to realize anything. The ego-consciousness cannot realize anything.

Does this mean, then, that there is no hope? Not at all. It turns us right back upon devotion. What we have to recognize is that devotion is not something that we stimulate in ourselves. That kind of ego-stimulated devotion is no devotion at all—actually no devotion at all, but only mental manipulation

for a selfish purpose. Real devotion is the Spirit of the Lord working in us. The act of praying is not something that we ourselves can stimulate by our natural devotions. We may have natural devotion, you know; and it is good as far as it goes; but spiritual devotion must be God within you—just as prayer is not something depending upon your natural powers, but is God within you.

A very wonderful instruction is offered on this point, and we particularly wish to call your attention to it because of its correspondence with the words of this Instruction. It is wonderful to find these points of confirmation. First I am going to read what is offered in the book called "The Supreme Identity," by Alan Watts:

* . . . [Christian] doctrine has always maintained that true prayer . . .

You know that prayer belongs to devotional life. When you practise devotion in religion, it includes prayer. We can speak of "prayer,"

*The Supreme Identity, by Alan W. Watts, page 173

or we can speak of "devotion," because they are comparable terms.

. . . [Christian] doctrine has always maintained that true prayer [or true devotion] is not simply man relating himself to God . . .

It is not something that the ego-consciousness does. The ego-consciousness cannot lift itself up to God. That is what Adam tried to do; he tried to make himself like God, and this is impossible for any creature. You cannot lift yourself up by your boot straps or by your ego-consciousness; people who try to do that fall into the bottomless pit of their own ego. Yet the way is already taken care of for you; it is taken care of by this vital, energy-giving fluid called the Precious Blood that circulates you right into the Corpus Christi, which is the Body of devotion.

. . . [Christian] doctrine has always maintained that true prayer is not simply man relating himself to God, but rather something which God is performing in and through man.

When you are caught into this devotional

action, it is this Precious Blood circulating in you, God's blood circulating in you—not your blood circulating in God, but God's blood circulating in you.

Prayer has its origin, not in the [human] soul, but in the indwelling Holy Spirit, and thus prayer is man's participation in the interior life of the Holy Trinity—even in its most stumbling and rudimentary form.

Even your most stumbling prayer is not your prayer, but is God praying in you. You may have only the vaguest glimpse of this; but whether you realize it fully or cannot realize it at all, nevertheless, it is true that God prays *all* the prayers.

'The consistently . . . Christian view . . .

(Now, notice this and take it to heart.)

'The consistently . . . Christian view has been that mere man cannot pray at all . . .

When a person sets himself up and says, "Well, I am good at praying," and he thinks it is his ego praying, he had better set the heating action of katabolism to work in his affairs!

'The consistently . . . Christian view has been that mere man cannot pray at all, that no movement of desire on the part of the natural man can constitute real prayer. It is God in us that prays. It is our nature penetrated by the divine Spirit, and assisted by the divine grace, that is alone capable of prayer in the full Christian sense.'

Now the other reference which I promised to give you in confirmation of this point, from the words of our own Instruction:

*There is perhaps no salvation whatsoever for one who is kept lukewarm and unaware of the miracle of his mouth.

What does it mean to be lukewarm and unaware? It means that you have no spiritual metabolism, no devotion. You are trying to warm up with your own ego. When you have gone through that evolutionary process of the spiritual action called repentance, turning around; when you have eliminated your own ego (by the process of the axioms you have eliminated your own ego and your own false identification), then you stand ready to be

*Chronicle of Reality 372,
by George Edwin Burnell, page 5

caught up into that miracle of truth, so that when you speak the word "I," it is the true realization. It is not because the Self has to realize something, not because the ego ever can realize anything; but because, when you speak the word of pure identity, that word is the authority of realization; and no method is needed.

And now, another sentence of confirmation from our Instruction:

* . . . you are only speaking out of the mouth of God when you pray . . .

God is using your mouth, your mind; maybe you are just speaking within your heart, but He is using your heart. He is using this heat in you to be your devotion. He is giving a spiritual metabolism, His devotion, into your body.

You are only speaking out of the mouth of God when you pray; and those who see that [those who accept that], pray most powerfully.

This is true. When a person sets himself up

*Super Justice 5, by George Edwin Burnell, page 22

as being devoted or as being loyal or as being a wonderful candidate of truth, he is wasting away in this eliminating process. The spiritual action is not your own—it is God's, but God uses you. He uses you—to be devotion in you, to be a spiritual metabolism (spiritual heat of love) in you, to pray in you. And when you have awakened to this and have found the authority of truth, your prayers are powerful.

Each of us has his own, first-hand experience when this realization comes; and mine came when I was faced with an appeal to pray for a person whose case had been pronounced by the medical profession to be absolutely hopeless. What was it that this realization came to? Was it to my ego-consciousness, or was it to that which I would like to believe was the true Self? Where did it come? Where does a thing come that already is? I tell of the experience because it is a striking example of the recognition that it is not one's own praying or one's own devotion or one's own faith that is this energy-giving power of healing; it is God Who is All in all.

When I was asked for prayers in this situation, my ego-consciousness stood up in defiance and said, "Well, what do you think you can do about it? Do you believe that your prayers are going to have any power, any effectuality, where all the skill of the doctors has failed completely?" And the answer came, not in words, but in authority: "It makes no difference what you think about your prayers or what you believe or what you are able to realize. It does not make any difference whether you can or cannot realize the effectuality of your prayers; this does not make any difference; it has nothing to do with it. Truth only has to do with truth, and whether you realize this or not makes no difference."

We do not need to tell you that the healing took place. God had spoken; God had taken hold.

If you can let go of your sense of self-importance, you will see that it is God Who uses your heart, your speech, your thought—whatever you have that you can offer on the altar of devotion to God. It is God Who takes

hold of your faculties and becomes the action in you, the prayer in you, the devotion in you, the metabolism—the heat, the love, the fire that burns up everything that ought not to be in order that we may have within the life-giving cells of our body this vigor of incorruption.

You are only speaking out of the mouth of God when you pray; and those who see that, pray most powerfully.

It is God in us Who prays. Our nature is penetrated by the divine Spirit and assisted by divine grace, for God alone is capable of prayer in the full Christian sense.

*All the Presence there is,
All the Power there is,
All the Consciousness there is,
Is *Love*, the *Living Spirit Almighty*.

*AXIOMS: Book of Health,
by George Edwin Burnell, page 80

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