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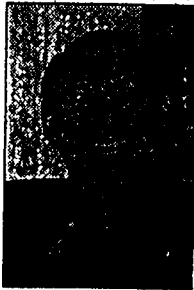
The ocean within

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Last week, we discussed the reasons why we disobey our genes and consume more salt than we should. We were conceived in the ocean, crawled in the marshes, and walked on dry land. Until about 7 million years ago, fruit was the main food for animals.

Now that it is legal to talk about evolution in Kansas, I can do so, although I certainly believe the Bible as being the true word of the Lord.

When the human and ape lives diverged, our ancestors began to eat a modest amount of meat, until about 1.7 million years ago, when *Homo Erectus* began to consume meat as he became a hunter/gatherer and migrated with the herds of grazing animals to hunt food. Our ancient ancestors consumed much more fruits and vegetables than they did meat,



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and the meat itself had a relatively low salt content. It was the potassium in the plants that, in contrast to salt, lowers blood pressure and tends to prevent cardiovascular disease.

However, too much of a good thing is bad, and an overdose of pure potassium could cause problems in folks who have insufficient kidney function and who could have stoppage of the heart. Additionally, there is a deficiency of magnesium in our diet due to the leaching out of this very important mineral from our soil over the years so that the plants have less of this. However, this is a subject for a future column.

The consumption of salt began to rise with the effects of over-hunting, nomadic changes, and population growth that led naturally to agriculture. In the first several thousand years, with the advent of the human being more of a gatherer than a hunter, the intake of meat declined and the proportion of plant foods in our diet increased up to 90 percent.

These early farmers probably ate the same amount of salt as did their previous ancestors,

who were more hunters than gatherers. As noted, plants contain a minimal amount of salt. Therefore, the herbivores, in contrast to the carnivores, suffered a salt deficiency, which was manifested in their traveling many miles in order to lick salty rocks (the so-called salt licks). On the other hand, the carnivores had a fair amount of salt in their body and did not visit salt licks, except in cases where there was no hope of making a meal of the herbivores that did.

Next week, more about the curse of salt.

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