

THOUGHTS OF SELF

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"Who are you?" asked the cheshire cat of Alice in wonderland. It is more profound than it appears. It is the same question we must ask of ourselves. I am a human being, a man! We are body and soul. We understand body because we feel it, but how do we experience soul? Do we even know we have a soul?

Ask children where do thoughts exist, they point to the mind. Where does love exist, they point to the heart. Where does conscience exists and they don't know. How about intellect or free will [will power] and they give a blank stare. Where or what is life and they don't understand. What is truth, what is guilt and where is peace.

A dead body possesses none of these qualities. Where did this viable part of us go? The tangible qualities of the body are in the five senses. The intangible qualities of our existance; Love, Conscience, Intellect, Free will, Thoughts, Beauty, Ethics, Morality, etc. are properties of the soul. While the body and soul coexist in this life, they are of one entity. When death separates the body and soul only the five bodily senses cease to exist. The properties of the soul continue to identify who we truly are even after death of the body for there is spiritual life after death. If there wasn't; then the intangibles of existance would be meaningless for there would only be the object of self fulfillment at any cost. Even athiests desire goodness for the sake of goodness. Even they answer to a higher principle where goodness becomes their god.

If we close our eyes, stuff our ears and lose all contact with the outside world; do we know we still exist? Our intellect would say yes. Intellect is a spiritual faculty which varifies our being [existance]. It is a power for knowledge. This reasoning tells us also that God is. [exists]

If we do not come to know God, then we come to know nothing. Love follows from knowledge; how can you love something that is unknown? Knowledge results in love and the two combined leads to action which is service. Love uses freedom to submit to another form or purpose, for freedom is an action of the will. Love imposes restrictions on the wills' freedom, for freedom is a risk. True love leads to obedience and obedience is proof of freedom for I choose it.

Things of the soul can not be quantified for they can't be defined. Can you give me a pound of love? Can you give me a yard of honesty? We can only recognize the quality of the spiritual, through its' action. The missionary spirit of the church is deeply concerned with the spiritual

works of mercy for they deal with the soul and its' redemptive dimension. They reassure the doubtful for we need to support one another's faith which is essential to the command to love one another. Too many are reluctant to become involved on a personal level; it is much easier to shovel money into the corporal works of mercy and be anonymous or otherwise non-involved; let someone else do it for I did my part. This is a very stilted version of brotherly love. The spiritual works of mercy require a personal contact to be operative.

Part of the command is to love neighbor as you love yourself. But is there anything that I can reserve that makes me, ME? Empathy, conscience, intent, justice and obedience are the intangible building blocks of love that determine our personality. The virtues of self love are obedience, silence, humility, seeking peace, friendship, sharing, self-control, place others first, and forgiveness to all. If we do not seek out these qualities we may well question self love. It is very difficult to truly love yourself; you must work at it. The more you conquer yourself the more you are a person in charge of yourself. The more you are in control of yourself, the more you will love your neighbor because you will not seek to qualify who he is. You will not hold back because you will know who you are. Selfishness is to hold on to love; not to share love is to love one's self excessively. The more you give love away, the more it grows and increases. The more you keep love the more selfish one becomes. This now becomes a gauge by which to measure. The more I truly love myself, the more I truly love my neighbor, the more I truly love God. Conversely, The more I act selfishly, the more I seek to qualify and ask who my neighbor is, the less I love God. The extent and quality of my love for God is directly tied to my ability to truly love myself, for love is a sacrifice. It is not a matter of saying yes; it is a matter of doing "yes".

The return of love is not a criteria by which to give love. The experience of hatred is not an excuse to deny love. They become the opportunity to truly share. We must not confuse likeable with loveable. Some one may not be likeable but they are loveable because God loves them. Remember that we may not be likeable to others, but God still loves us also. Love was meant to be shared; likeable was meant for our own comfort.

Who are you? Only you can answer that!