

# Know Yourself!

## Do We Understand Who We Really Are?

The title above is rather disarming, in the sense that “Of course, I know who I am!” We are physical beings living on this earth, existing upon the fruit of the soils to grow and metabolize as any sentient being must. How could our consciousness know it any other way?

Yet, as it turns out things are not so simple. We can begin by explaining the nature of ourselves as homo sapiens through a quote from one of the great scientists of the 20th Century, Alexis Carrel, a Nobel Prize winner who in 1935 wrote the book *Man the Unknown* (Halcyon House, New York). Here is an extensive quote from Chapter 1 of that book, “The Need for a Better Knowledge of Man.”

“In fact our ignorance [of man] is profound. Most of the questions put to themselves by those who study human beings remain without answer. Immense regions of our inner world are still unknown. How do the molecules of chemical substances associate in order to form the complex and temporary organs of the cell? How do the genes contained in the nucleus of a fertilized ovum determine the characteristics of the individual deriving from that ovum? How do cells organize themselves by their own efforts into societies, such as the tissues and the organs? Like the ants and the bees, they have advance knowledge of the part they are destined to play in the life of the community. And hidden mechanisms enable them to build up an organism both complex and simple. What is the nature of our duration, of psychological time, and of physiological time?

“We know that we are a compound of tissues, organs, fluids and consciousness. But the relations between consciousness and cerebrum are still a mystery. We lack almost entirely a knowledge of the physiology of nervous cells. To what extent does willpower modify the organism? How is the mind influenced by the state of the organs? In what manner can the organic and mental characteristics, which each individual inherits, be changed by the mode of life, the chemical substances contained in food, the climate, and the physiological and moral disciplines?

“We are very far from knowing what relations exist between skeleton, muscles, and organs, and mental and spiritual activities. We are ignorant of the factors that bring about nervous equilibrium and resistance to fatigue and to diseases. We do not know how moral sense, judgment, and audacity could be augmented. What is the relative importance of intellectual, moral, and mystical activities? What is the significance of esthetic and religious sense? What form of energy is responsible for telepathic communications? Without any doubt, certain physiological and mental factors determine happiness or misery, success or failure. But we do not know what they are. We cannot artificially give to any individual the aptitude for happiness. As yet, we do not know what environment is the most favorable for the optimum development of civilized man. Is it possible to suppress struggle, effort, and suffering from our physiological and spiritual formation? How can we prevent the degeneracy of man in modern civilization? Many other questions could be asked on subjects which are to us of the utmost interest. They would also remain unanswered. It is quite evident that the accomplishments of all the sciences having man as an object remain insufficient, and that our knowledge of ourselves is still most rudimentary.”

What a profound but truthful admission of ignorance by a highly learned man from the last century! Can we claim any greater knowledge today of who we really are, even with amazing advances in science and technology? From a purely materialistic perspective we can say that we understand more about our genetic code and the intricate operation of cells, tissues, and organs than ever before, but that only opens up even more questions about how these living cells and systems originate from a single cell and grow in programmed sequence from gestation, through birth, to an infant, adolescent, and adult. Dr. Carrel alludes to these marvelous mysteries throughout his book, and it is not the objective of this study to uncover all of these mysteries ... except to point us to the One who designed this wonderful creature called man — who knows all the blueprints and schemata about us — and made us in His very own image.

### **Know Yourself — A Very Important Matter**

Knowing who you are should appear as a basic focus of study for each of us throughout our lives. This knowledge should guide the pathway of how we should live, so its great importance is at once evident. It is a knowledge that must grow continually as we come to better understand the majesty and intricacy of this vessel called man, a vessel that is much, much more than the physical being we see reflected in a mirror.

Before we begin exploring the intricate nature of man, let us see what our Creator has to say about knowing ourselves ... why it is critical to understand who we are.

Romans 12:3. “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

These words indicate that we ought to understand who we truly are, and have a right view of ourselves. While we know we are part of the ecclesia, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:27), we also must understand that we are personally responsible for what we do; we cannot hide behind the accomplishments or faith of someone else. Each of us is an individual creation before almighty God, personally responsible to Him for his thoughts, words, and deeds. In fact, we are responsible for every idle word that escapes from our mouths (Matthew 12:36)!

### **The Old Man**

What are we? Where did we come from? There is considerable evidence that we existed before we were born into this world, and I will spend just a bit of effort on this matter. It is an issue that some are not willing to accept, but rest assured this is not a matter of salvation. It is, however, profitable to understand the truth in all things.

Let us examine the history of Adam, Jesus Christ, and then ourselves.

**Adam.** Our first father was created out of the ground and became a living being or *soul*.

Genesis 2:7 “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.”

*living being = nephesh, “breathing creature”.*

This Adam traces his genealogy to the spirit realm as a son of Elohim (Luke 3:38). *Son = huios*, “a son, so resembling the Father that distinctions between the two are not discernible.” He

traced his lineage back into the spirit realm.

**Jesus.** His origin can be traced to the very beginning of this eon and before. Besides, He was foreordained from before the foundation of the world.

I Peter 1: 20. "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ..."

*foundation = katabol*, "a founding, conception."

John 1:1-3, 14. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made .... And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 17:5, 18. "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was .... As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

**The elect (us).** Those who have been drawn by the Father to come to Jesus (John 6:44) likewise are shown to have existed before, even as Jesus existed before the foundation of the world, pre-determined to be His own elect!

Ephesians 1:3-5. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will ...."

*foundation = katabol*

*predestined = proorizo*, "to determine before, foreordain."

Romans 8:29. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Hebrews 2:14. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

*partaken = koinoneo*, "to share with others"; from *koinonos*, "a sharer or associate."

The saints (us) have partaken of fleshly bodies just as Jesus did, meaning that we had to exist before just as He did ... in what form or situation we cannot ascertain, although we are given a vision of the "heavenly council" amongst whom Jesus was in Psalm 45:6-7: "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." This Individual who was "anointed more than Your companions" is identified in Hebrews 1:8-9 as Jesus Christ. Might the saints have been among those in the heavenly council as well?

Ephesians 1:4 claims that our Father in heaven has chosen us to be holy and without blame before Him in love. Spiros Zodhiates in *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2008), emphasizes that the words "He has chosen", the Greek

word *exelexato*, means “chosen out of.” He says, “In this context, the word means that at one particular time in the past, God chose individuals for salvation (Matthew 24:31; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:33; II Timothy 2:10; James 2:5).”

The Apostle Paul gives some critical insights into the nature of man that Elohim placed on the earth. We read of this “three-part” character of man in I Thessalonians 5:23.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray that your whole *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

*spirit* = *pneuma*, “a current of air, breath, a breeze; by analogy a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul.”

*soul* = *psuche*, “breath, i.e. (by implication) spirit (the animal sentient principle only).” This term means the “breath” or “breath of life”, the vital force that animates the body and shows itself in breathing, as in Acts 20:10. It can refer to life of animals as well, as in Revelation 8:9. It refers to “life” in Matthew 6:25 and I Corinthians 15:45. *Psuche* can also mean “soul” as the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, or aversions, as in Luke 1:48 and 2:35, but it can mean also a “moral being designed for everlasting life” (III John 2; I Peter 2:11). Even more, *psuche* can mean an essence that differs from the physical body and is not dissolved at death (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 6:9).

*body* = *soma*, “the body.”

With this three-fold characteristic of us, one may say that, in general, the parts of the human being are ...

1. The physical body (“body”)
2. The essence of God that lives within the body and motivates it (“spirit”)
3. The principle of life that activates the flesh (“soul”)

Our flesh and blood (“body”) are fairly straightforward to understand. See Genesis 2:7: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground ....” The “soul”, however, is the living principle that enables us to be active, that drives the cells of our body to metabolize and multiply. See Genesis 2:7 again: “... and breathed in his [Adam’s] nostrils the breath of life, and man became a **living soul**.”

*living* = *chay*, “alive, hence raw, fresh, strong, life.”

*soul* = *nepshesh*, “a breathing creature, i.e. animal of vitality.”

*Nepshesh* and *psuche* are usually equivalent terms in the Old and New Testaments. *Nepshesh* also applies to other beings such as animals, birds, and fish (Genesis 1:20=21). Paul stated that “... the body without the spirit (*pneuma*) is dead” (James 2:26).

### The Intertwined Soul and Spirit

The “soul” and “spirit” are intertwined very closely, as is evident from Hebrews 4:12.

“For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the **joints** and **marrow**, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

*joints* = *harmos*, “an articulation of the body, or a joining or joint.”

*marrow* = *muelos*, “the marrow [or bone].”

Even as the marrow of the bone is in close proximity to the joints, and both are part of the same body, so are the soul and spirit intrinsically tied and linked. Interestingly, the “joints” here are in parallel with the “soul”, and the “marrow” with the “spirit.” The marrow produces red blood cells

that bring oxygen and life throughout the body, whereas the joints only provide a means to animate and articulate it. Thus, the “marrow” [spirit] is seen to generate the energy for life, to give the “joints”[soul] the possibility to move and accomplish.

Is it possible, then, to essentially link the “soul” [vital life force] with its basic inborn desires that have little discipline, and the “spirit” that expresses the “essence of God?” Either can direct the body to act, but the soul is party to inborn animalistic desires — satisfying the “lusts of the flesh” — whereas the spirit satisfies the will of God who gave it (or of an evil spirit which can motivate the individual to serve the flesh). See what Paul says in Romans 7.

Romans 7:14, 18, 22-25. “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not, for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that I do .... For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not .... For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ Our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Our entire being is made in the “*image* of God” (Genesis 1:26-27), so we are like Jesus Christ when He was a human being on earth, and thus we are like the Father Himself (John 14:9). *Image* = *tselem*, “to shade, a phantom, i.e. (figuratively) illusion, resemblance, hence a representative figure.” Note Genesis 5:3, where Adam begat Seth in his “image” [*tselem*], and in I Samuel 6:5 *tselem* means “replica.”

While God is spirit and we are flesh, yet we contain the same attributes as He does. As “imagers of God” we have the same destiny as Jesus Christ, as His brothers (Romans 8:29), to become sons of Elohim at the Father’s right hand (Revelation 3:21; Psalm 132:12). We are made male or female, although Adam initially was like God, being a combined male and female complete being.

Genesis 2:21-23. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”

Since the male and female were separated they long to return to one another, and are incomplete without each other.

Genesis 2:18. “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.”

Genesis 3:16. “... and your [the woman’s] desire shall be to your husband ....”

Notice that the angels, and presumably other spirit beings, are not male and female and do not reproduce in the spirit realm.

Matthew 22:30. “For in the resurrection they [people that are resurrected] neither marry

nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”

### **The Depravity of the Old Self**

Thus we see a three-part human who slid into sin from the very beginning of his tenure on earth, a man possessing a body, mind, and spirit. Within this fleshly framework, the self struggles to realize its worth, to generate a view that might lead it out of the hopeless “congenital depravity” into which it has slipped.

As King David so aptly put it, “Behold, I was brought forth in *iniquity* [*avon*, “perversity”], and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Sometimes that wickedness is so strong that people speak lies as soon as they are born (Psalm 58:3), showing that perhaps some of these people were indeed destined by the Master Potter for destruction from the beginning (Romans 9:18-22). Note these various declarations of the inborn depravity of the old self.

Romans 8:7. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”

Jeremiah 17:9. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

Job 15:14-16. “What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous? If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!”

Genesis 8:24. “... I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth ....”

Isaiah 43:27. “Your first father sinned, and your mediators have transgressed against Me.”

### **The New Man**

The old man — the one with the body, soul, and human spirit — cannot please the Creator (Romans 8:7-8), any more than Adam and Eve could once they sinned and lost that perfect power of the Eternal. This old man could not perceive the truths imparted by the Creator, for those timeless truths are perceived only by the indwelling spirit of God imparted through repentance, faith, baptism, and the laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:1-2). Indeed, through the spirit placed within a person all things have become new!

II Corinthians 5:17-18. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; and old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”

Romans 8:9-10. “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Galatians 6:15. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails any-

thing, but a new creation.”

Revelation 21:4-5. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’”

The truth in all things becomes the objective of this new creature, putting aside the old ways of “... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Timothy 3:7; see also I Corinthians 1: 20-27; 2:6, 12-13; 3:19; Colossians 2:8; I Timothy 6:20-21; James 3:15-16; Isaiah 29:14; 44:25; Jeremiah 8:9). This truth is sought within the word of God, within the creation, and within secular knowledge that squares with God’s truth, for the new creature will “Test all things [and] hold fast what is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21).

The new person, the “real me” in the spiritual state becomes a creature possessing, in addition to the body, soul, and spirit of man, the spirit of God. It is the person that the Apostle Paul made plain in Philippians 1:23 could be with Christ in the spirit realm, or be with the brethren in the flesh. Paul reaffirms this reality — that the same person could be either spirit or flesh — in II Corinthians 5:8 and II Timothy 4:6.

This “new me,” which continues after death and waits for the resurrection (Ecclesiastes 12:7; I Thessalonians 4:15-17), will be made alive as was Christ made alive (I Corinthians 15:22), “... delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

The self in a real sense will become an “I am,” a self-existent spirit being in the same sense that Yahweh declared He was the I AM in the midst of the burning bush.

Exodus 3:14. “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.’”

Perhaps we can turn that statement around: By stating, “Who am I?”, one can say, “I am!” Even as Jesus Christ and the Father are forever, so will be the saints. We will be like Him as spirit to reign for eternity (I John 3:2; Romans 8:29; I Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:4; II Peter 1:4).

## Knowing the New Self

Having put off the old man, it is a major responsibility of the child of God to know himself apart from the past sinful man. This vision is hardly static as the old habits are subdued by the pervasive power of the holy spirit living within the person. How, then, can a person get to know this new person? By growing into the character of the One who made you and called you into this marvelous group called the elect.

**1. Build on the foundation of our Creator and of Christ** (I Corinthians 3:11; II Timothy 2:19), which Chief Cornerstone is Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20; II Corinthians 10:4).

Matthew 7:24-27. “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do

them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

**2. Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed [metamorphoo] by the renewing [anakainosis, “renovation”] of your mind (Romans 12:2).** The world’s system has no place for us. Its wisdom is rejected by the Creator (II Timothy 3:7), and we are to be building in a different direction.

**3. Associate with the lowly, the “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3), who are likewise putting on a new identity from the former self.**

Romans 12:16 “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. (See also Philippians 2:1-5).

**4. Exercise the gifts of the spirit to reveal that new identity placed within you by the spirit.**

I Peter 4:10. “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (See also I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:4-8).

**5. Utilize the tools for spiritual growth that God has given us so the new self can expand within you, and fill you.** Pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17), meditate upon His ways (Psalm 1:2), study the word of God regularly (II Timothy 2:15; 3:16), and fellowship regularly (Hebrews 10:25).

**6. Allow the mind and spirit of the Father to reign freely within you, that your body, mind, and spirit will continually be filled with the new you, casting out the old man and its sinful habits (Ephesians 5:18).**

In whatever sphere of influence the Eternal has given us to function within this world, we must grow into that mold to the fullest. As Paul stated.

II Corinthians 10:13. “We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us — a sphere which specially includes you.”

That sphere of operation is a large part of knowing ourselves, and we are emphatically warned to not compare ourselves with others in this process (II Corinthians 10:12). Our spiritual gifts by which we serve others should guide us into the knowledge of who we are as a new creature, by a loving God who knows precisely who you are, and what you need to do to become that mature vessel of His ... for He says,

Philippians 2:12-13. “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ....”