

**A FATHER SCOTT PAMPHLET**

Scott, Martin Jerome  
- Prove there's a soul  
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**PROVE**

**THERE'S**

**A SOUL!**

**THAT WILL LIVE  
FOREVER!**

**MARTIN J. SCOTT, S.J.**

**THE AMERICA PRESS**

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# PROVE THERE'S A SOUL

## That Will Live Forever

Martin J. Scott, S.J.

You maintain that the soul of man is no different from that of an animal, and that consequently all this talk about the immortality of the soul is absurd.

Yes, that's what I hold, and that's what science confirms.

May I ask you what you understand by the immortality of the soul?

Why, that's easy. As everyone knows it means that the soul will never die.

Why do you say it is absurd to believe that the soul will never die?

For the simple reason that everything in the world eventually decays and perishes. That ought to settle the matter.

By that statement you evidently believe that the soul is not different from the material things about us?

Exactly. And since every material thing gradually disintegrates and perishes, so does the soul.

But, my dear sir, the soul is not material but a spiritual substance.



That's your assumption. Of course, if you believe that discredited notion you are welcome to believe whatever you wish about the soul, but please don't try to make others agree with you.

Now, I know you to be a sensible person, and may I ask you to consider this matter reasonably? I am sure that if you are open to conviction, I can show you that the soul is a spiritual substance, that is, that it is not material, and hence will not perish as everything material must perish.

I don't think you can convince me, but if you want to, you may go ahead; but I tell you beforehand that you're wasting your time and energy.

Well, as a starter, let me state what is meant by a spiritual substance. Now, please, give me close attention, for on the right understanding of a spiritual substance depends this entire question.

I'm at your service, shoot.

A spiritual substance is something which although very real is not perceptible by the senses. The existence of some things are known not by their appearance but by their effects. For instance, take the power of a live rail. A person looking at a live rail would perceive no difference in it from a dead rail, yet the live rail is charged with something so powerful that it can move a heavy train and heat and light it. The electricity with which the live rail is charged is not perceptible by the senses, yet it is something real, as you will learn if you come in contact with it.

If I come in contact with it! Does that not show

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that it is by the senses that I know it, namely, by the sense of touch?

By contact you learn one of the effects of electricity but not what it is in itself. Not even Edison knew what electricity is, except that it is something powerful under certain conditions.

Do you infer, therefore, that electricity, because not perceptible by the senses, is a spiritual substance?

Not at all. I am proceeding gradually, and use the example of the live wire only to show that we know certain things not in themselves but by their effects.

Well, I'll grant you that point, proceed.

The effects of the live wire are such as can be produced by material power, so although we cannot perceive that power by our senses we know from its effect that it is material and not spiritual.

Would you mind making that a little clearer. What do you mean by saying its effects are such as can be produced by material power?

That's a very good question, and its answer is the key to this entire subject. Effects follow the nature of their cause. Material effects come from a material cause, and since the effects of the live rail are material, namely, light, heat and transportation, etc., we conclude that the power which produces them is material.

Can you give me an example of an effect which could come only from a spiritual cause?

Yes, for instance, when a person invents something. Have you ever reflected that no animal has ever invented anything?

How does invention prove a spiritual cause? I don't see the connection.

The connection is that, before a person invents a thing, he has an idea of what he is going to invent and proceeds to develop the idea. This idea is not a material thing. It is, however, something real since it inspires and directs the inventor to bring into existence something which did not exist previously.

As I understand it, you mean that unless an inventor first had an idea of something new he could never produce it?

Precisely. Before Edison invented the electric lamp he had an idea of the possibility of illumination by electricity. Then he made hundreds of experiments until eventually he gave to the world an absolutely new creation, the electric lamp. Unless he had the idea, and unless the idea was something real, though not material, he never could have worked toward its fulfilment.

Why do you say an idea is real, though not material?

Because everything material has size, weight, form, etc. An idea has none of these things. For instance, you have an idea of honor. You know what honor is, that it is a real quality. But what size, or weight, or color, or form, is honor? The idea of honor, therefore, is something real yet not material. The idea of

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honor is a notion which is obtained by the soul's power of abstraction and generalizing. For example, we see people doing noble and generous things, and note that there is a certain distinctive quality displayed in all such actions. This quality is not perceptible by the senses because it is the result of comparison, analysis and deduction, a process possible to a spiritual faculty only.

Your argument, therefore, is that since we may know the nature of things by their effects we may know that certain things are spiritual because their effects are spiritual, and you specify ideas as an example of such effects.

Exactly. For instance, since the intellect of man generates and deals with ideas it is clear that the intellect of man is spiritual.

Do you mind further specifying some of the ideas which show that man's intellect is a spiritual substance?

Gladly. Man has such ideas as futurity, eternity, liberty, justice, and others such. Now, although you have an idea of futurity, the future does not exist. With regards to justice you know what justice is, but you have never perceived justice by your senses. You have seen a just man or a just deed, but you have never seen the quality we call justice. For instance, what color is justice, what is its shape, how much does it weigh and what are its dimensions? Everything material is of definite size and weight. But justice being an idea has none of these qualities.

Now, since man's intellect, by its power of analysis

derives the idea of honor from the consideration of how honorable people act, so it derives ideas of justice, courage and other immaterial notions in the same way. This power of the intellect is known as abstraction and is possible to a spiritual faculty only. By the senses one can observe an honorable deed or an honorable man, but no one has ever seen the idea which we designate as honor, because it is immaterial and not perceptible by the senses, but only by the spiritual faculty which we call the intellect.

You infer, therefore, that man's intellect is a spiritual substance; but, by the same reasoning, would you not conclude that an animal also has a spiritual intellect, for an animal also has ideas?

The proof that animals have not ideas is evident from the fact that no animal has ever originated anything. Animals in every essential respect are the same now as they were thousands of years ago. They are not progressive like man, and the reason is that progress comes by reason of ideas which pertain to a spiritual substance only. Animals are limited to what their senses perceive and hence are incapable of idealizing, which is the basis of invention, progress and culture.

Therefore, you maintain that the soul of animals is not spiritual because its activities are limited to what can be reached by the senses, and that consequently animals are incapable of reasoning. Do I understand you to mean that?

Exactly that. I know, however, what's in your mind. You are thinking of the cleverness of animals, the



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devotion of animals, the marvelous ingenuity of some animals. But have you ever known an animal to do things differently from others of its species? Have you ever known an animal to impart to another animal what it has been taught to do by man? To change a way of doing things, or to teach things to others requires ideas, and since animals are incapable of ideas, they do not change their ways, nor can they teach others.

Do you mean to say that the art and skill shown by a spider in making its web, or of the bee in constructing its honeycomb are not rational activities?

Such activities are highly skilful, as you say, but they are not rational because they are not the result of the animal's reason but of instinct, which is the mind of their Maker guiding and directing them to a definite purpose. In their own sphere animals are ordinarily more clever than man. But they are just as clever shortly after birth as in maturity, except when influenced by the intelligence of man. Animal intelligence, although not spiritual, is marvelously adapted to the needs of the various species. But from the beginning of time animals have acted and now act precisely in the same way, if left to themselves.

I must say you have cleared up quite a lot of misunderstanding I have had about the matter of animal intelligence. But tell me what all this discussion about the spirituality of the soul has got to do with the subject before us, namely, the immortality of the soul?

It has everything to do with it, as you shall see; for since the soul is a spiritual substance it is by its very nature indestructible. Before we proceed, however, with this point, let me present other evidence for the spirituality of the soul, which is really the basis of its immortality. The destruction of a thing, as we shall see in detail later, comes about by its separation into its constituent parts; but as a spiritual substance has no parts, it cannot be separated, hence will never perish. You see, therefore, the importance of realizing that the soul is spiritual, that it has no parts.

Yes, I see that everything depends on that, and I am desirous of getting further proof that the soul is not material.

The proof already given is entirely sufficient, but as you may want to convince others, I offer another proof of a very different kind to show that the soul is spiritual, that is, that the soul is not material.

I'm greatly interested, go ahead.

The following proof is based on the nature of matter, and is more readily understood than the proof based on the power of the soul to originate and deal with ideas. For people generally, this proof is perhaps the most readily comprehended.

I'm glad to get a popular proof, because the proof from the nature of ideas requires considerable effort to follow.

The proof I now present, although more popular is, nevertheless, just as logical and clinching as the previous one based on the nature of ideas.

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Very well, proceed. I'm all ears.

The point to establish is that the soul is not material but spiritual. The demonstration runs thus: The soul can reflect perfectly on itself. Nothing material can do that, and, therefore, the soul is not material but spiritual.

What do you mean by reflecting on itself?

Let me begin by saying that by the soul we mean that attribute of man by which, among other things, he reasons. Sometimes the soul is called the intellect or will or mind. It is at times referred to as the brain, as when we say that a person is a man of brains, etc. In brief, the soul is that power or attribute of man which signifies his personality, as when he says *I* did this, *I* did that, etc. Now, to answer your question of what is meant by the soul's power of reflecting on itself, I mean that it can wholly turn back on its whole self. For instance, I can reflect personally on myself, criticize myself, approve or condemn myself and so on. Nothing material can thus turn back or reflect on itself.

Can you make that point a little clearer?

Perhaps an example will help. For instance, the tip of your little finger can touch various parts of your body, but it cannot touch itself. That is the meaning of something reflecting perfectly on itself. But *I* can reflect perfectly on myself. By my intellect, I can examine my intellectual processes, my very thoughts. I can subject myself to my own analysis. Nothing that has parts can thus entirely go back or

reflect on itself, because if contact is made, it is some one part touching another, but not the whole reflecting on the whole, as man can wholly reflect on himself.

Say, that's interesting.

It's more than interesting. It's proof positive that the soul has no parts, that is, that the soul is not material.

I must say that you have convinced me on that point, but what has it got to do with the immortality of the soul?

Well, as I said previously, the destruction of a thing comes about by disintegration, that is, by the separation of a thing into the various elements which constitute it.

Would you mind clarifying that a little?

Let's take a piece of wood, for instance. How do you destroy the wood? Not by cutting or whittling it, for it remains wood down to the tiniest particle. A shaving is wood as well as a great log. The only way you can destroy wood is by separating its various elements. This may be done by chemicals or fire. By burning the wood, its various elements are separated, some going off in heat, some in light, some in smoke, some in various gasses, and the residue is ashes. The result is that what formerly was wood is now ashes. The wood has ceased to exist. Now, since the soul has no parts it cannot be disintegrated. Hence, we must conclude that by its nature the soul is indestructible, and that, therefore, it is immortal.



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I must admit that I have no comeback to that reasoning. On reflection it seems to me that most people, and I have been one of them, form opinions on specious or superficial grounds. They follow someone's lead and in doing so imagine they are thinking for themselves, whereas they are only echoing the thoughts of others.

That is particularly true of those who indulge in wishful thinking. Now, to proceed with further proofs for the immortality of the soul. For, while the spirituality of the soul is the principal reason for its immortality, there are other cogent and supplementary reasons for the existence of the soul in a life beyond this mortal span of years.

Before stating these reasons let me call your attention to the tremendous importance of the subject.

I am desirous of knowing everything that pertains to the immortality of the soul, for it is a subject that often comes up when men get into serious conversation.

The immortality of the soul has a greater bearing on life than almost any other matter. If man's goal is the grave, Christianity is the greatest imposture the world has known. It also follows that the Founder of Christianity was either a liar or a lunatic. The very basis not only of Christianity, but of every religion, is that there is a life beyond the grave. It makes a vast difference to man whether he is made for time or eternity. If man is made for this life only, his code of conduct will be that of the

jungle, where force and cunning prevail. If man is made for this life only, he is nothing but a high-grade animal, and will act accordingly, as we see so many now doing who deny life hereafter. If man's life terminates here, he is justified in doing whatever is to his pleasure or advantage, regardless of everything except the present consequences of his acts. Natural morality is a myth unless it has a sanction, and that sanction vanishes with the denial of immortality. There is only one Commandment for those who do not believe in the immortality of the soul: to avoid the present penalty of wrongdoing.

Let me disagree with you here. I know people who do not believe in the immortality of the soul yet live upright lives.

The reason for it, in such cases, is that either they do not act consistently with their belief, or because the prevalent code of morality is Christian and they conform to it from custom.

What do you mean by the present code of morality being Christian?

I mean that for hundreds of generations Christian morality has influenced mankind to such an extent that, even those who are not Christian almost naturally conform to it. It is impossible to live in certain surroundings without being more or less affected by them. It follows that some people may deny the immortality of the soul, yet, externally, live as if they did believe. It's hard to escape altogether from one's environment.

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I see. Just as bad surroundings tend to bring people to a low level of conduct, so good surroundings influence them for a high standard. I admit that Christian civilization accounts for upright lives even by those who deny immortality.

But, tell me, please, what you mean by saying that some persons who do not believe in the immortality of the soul, nevertheless lead good lives because they do not act consistently with their belief?

By this is meant that if a person consistently acted in accordance with the belief that there was no life beyond the grave, he would live to suit his own pleasure and advantage, regardless of the rights of others.

But is there not such a thing as natural law and natural goodness?

Natural law is founded on justice, and justice depends on either natural or Divine power to uphold it. If a man denies the immortality of the soul, he would, if consistent, deny Divine sanction and have regard to human sanction only, which means that if he were consistent he would have regard to one thing only, that is, not to be detected and punished. But Divine sanction is so firmly implanted in man that despite false theories of life he cannot altogether ignore it. And so it is that you find people who despite belief in error, nevertheless, live better than their belief.

That certainly explains a lot of problems I have

had about religion. I am beginning to see that the only doctrine of life which really explains man and life is that which is based on the immortality of the soul.

And you should also see why it is that one of the reasons why those who wish to be a law to themselves, desire to accept as true whatever theory will give them full license to do as they please.

You must admit, however, that there are persons who in good faith deny the immortality of the soul?

Only God knows the conscience of man, and only God may pass judgment on man. Owing to circumstances a person may be an honest adherent of an erroneous doctrine. But that furnishes no argument for embracing error.

I am pleased to see that you always take a considerate view of those who differ from you. You make allowance when possible for opponents.

They are not my opponents but the opponents of truth, and the upholder of truth should also realize that the great law of life is charity, not only of deed but also of judgment. So, whenever possible, the defender of truth should be most considerate of the person in error but never of error itself.

I am firmly convinced that the only way to lead those in error to see the truth is by making every allowance for their background, as you have done in my case. May I ask you now, to proceed with



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the other reasons you were to give as supplementary proof for the immortality of the soul?

Let us begin with the proof from justice. It may be stated briefly as follows: In this life the just often suffer and the unjust often prosper. Unless there is a life beyond the grave, the Creator and Ruler of mankind would be a rewarder of those who defy Him and a chastiser of those who serve Him. Hence unless we are willing to believe that the Creator and Ruler of the world is unjust, we must believe in a future life wherein He will render to everyone according to his deeds.

May I venture the remark that in this argument you take for granted that there is a personal Creator and Ruler of the world and that He is necessarily just.

If a person makes this objection, it is only necessary to refer him to the proof for the existence of a personal God Who is infinitely perfect, hence infinitely just.\*

Another remark, please. Why do you say that a person who is unjust defies the Creator?

For this reason: Conscience is God's law made known to man. An unjust person is a violator of conscience, hence of God's law; hence he defies his Creator and Ruler.

Yes, I see the force of your argument in the case of those who deliberately do what they know to be

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\*Confer: *Have You a God?* The Scott Series of Pamphlets, No. I.

wrong, but sometimes a person is unjust without realizing it.

In that case, he does not concern us. We consider only the fact that there is much deliberate and planned injustice among mankind, and that such unjust persons frequently gain honors, wealth and reputation, while their victims suffer the loss of fortune, honor and even life itself. If there is no future life we must conclude that the Maker and Ruler of mankind is not only indifferent to justice but actually favors injustice.

That proof seems conclusive, and perhaps to some people it would appeal more than the learned reasons based on the spirituality of the soul.

The reason for its strong appeal is that it intimately affects the average person. A normal man must conclude that God is a monster of cruelty unless there is a life beyond in which the dreadful injustices of this life are rectified. Nearly everyone has at some time or other been the victim or witness of injustice and must conclude that a Being Who gave us our sense of justice will not Himself put a premium on injustice. It is the highest exercise of reason to conclude that the Maker and Ruler of the universe is at least as solicitous for justice as the most just human ruler that ever lived.

It follows that the Supreme Ruler of mankind will not tolerate that the sense of injustice with which He endowed human nature should be defied with impunity. Man has only the brief period of mortal life to rectify wrongs, but God has eternity to justify

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His ways. Justice, accordingly, postulates a life beyond this present mortal span. That this future life will be everlasting will now be shown by the nature of the instinct for perfect happiness which is inherent in every human being.

Do I understand that the proof from justice postulates a future life only, but not necessarily an unending life?

Strictly speaking, yes. You see, the injustices of life may be rectified—even if rectification does not demand everlasting life. We know, however, from the nature of the soul that this life will be forever since, as we have shown, a spiritual substance is immortal.

You have just stated that a proof for the immortality of the soul is furnished by the instinct for perfect happiness which is inbred in human nature. May I ask you to explain that statement?

With pleasure. The proof runs thus: Man has an instinct, that is, a natural craving, for perfect happiness. Instinct comes from the Author of nature, and must have an object whose attainment will satisfy it. But perfect happiness is not attainable in mortal life; hence there must be an immortal life wherein this instinct will find its attainment.

That proof, it seems to me, takes a lot for granted. For instance, it states that man has an instinct for perfect happiness, and that perfect happiness is not attainable in this life and, finally, that it is attainable only by immortal life.

I expected you to question those statements. In fact if you had not done so I should not consider you the intelligent man I know you to be.

Well, let's hear what you have to say on each.

We shall take them in order. That man has an instinct or natural craving for perfect happiness is evident from the fact that no matter what he has of pleasure or possession there is always something more that he desires. Desires when fulfilled open the way to further desires. Pleasure after brief enjoyment creates an inclination for further pleasure. The result is that man's heart is never at rest, no matter how much it has satisfied its longings. Now, as we know, every natural appetite has an object to satisfy it. Hunger has food, thirst has water, fatigue has sleep, etc., etc. But the craving for perfect happiness is never satisfied here, so there must be another life in which it is satisfied, for a wise Maker makes nothing in vain, that is, without a purpose.

I grant what you say about perfect happiness not being attainable in this life, and man's craving for perfect happiness; but why do you maintain that immortality is necessary for perfect happiness? Could not man be perfectly happy without life being everlasting?

No. For suppose a man had everything he could possibly desire of happiness and possessions, yet knew that at any moment it all might end. This uncertainty would be a constant dread and would mar the happiness, thus preventing it from being perfect. Perpetuity of happiness is essential to its being



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perfect, and there can be no perpetuity without immortality. If it were possible for the soul to cease to be, this possibility would rob perfect happiness of its most essential quality.

Yes, on reflection, I see that what you say is so. In this mortal life the thing that people most desire is permanence, whether it be of health or wealth or any other good thing. And when permanence is threatened peace vanishes.

Permanence is so essential to happiness even in this life that, in order to secure it, as far as is humanly possible, people insure their property and other things against the uncertainty which always threatens everything mortal. Immortality gives to happiness a certainty of permanence without which no happiness can perfectly satisfy the human heart. Saint Augustine has beautifully expressed this idea in words which are worthy of immortal fame: "O God, Thou hast made our heart for Thyself and it will never be at rest until it rests in Thee." The meaning of this expression is, of course, that nothing mortal can satisfy the immortal spirit.

I quite agree with you. I have known people who seemed to have everything that this world could give, and yet were so dissatisfied with their life that they voluntarily destroyed it.

That confirms the Scripture saying: "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (*Hebrews* xiii, 14). And with that thought im-

pressed on our mind let us pass to another and our last proof for the immortality of the soul, namely, the universal belief of mankind.

In order that you may understand the force of this argument it is necessary to refresh your mind with the axiom that whatever pertains to man everywhere and at all times is part of his nature and, therefore, owes its origin to the Author of nature. Hence, if mankind has at all times and places believed in the immortality of the soul, we may know for certain that such a belief has its origin in the Creator of man and is consequently true. Unless people believed in the immortality of the soul they would not be concerned about the fate of man after death. If death ended all that there was of man, the grave would be the end of him altogether. But from time immemorial, and among people no matter where situated, sacred rites for the welfare of the dead have been performed. No matter how cultured or ignorant people have been, there is no record of any nation or tribe that has not held religious worship for the spirit of the departed mortal.

I think you mentioned something of the same kind with regard to belief in God.\*

Yes, and you then questioned the universality of such belief, and it was shown to you that despite some statements to the contrary it is now established for certain that universality of belief in God and

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\*Confer: *Have You a God?* The Scott Series of Pamphlets, No. I.

universality of religious rites for the dead are facts beyond dispute.

I no longer have any doubts with regard to either of these matters, for I realize that although some individuals question them, such persons are the exception which proves the rule.

Religious rites for the dead being a universal practice among mankind, necessarily originated in human nature, and have for their authority the Author of human nature. Who is Truth itself.

But how does worship which concerns the dead prove the immortality of the soul?

It proves that the spirit or soul of man did not perish with his mortal body, and that unlike the body it is not mortal but immortal, for when separated from the body it has no elements of distintegration.

Well now, of the various proofs you have given, which do you consider the best?

It depends on the person to whom you are addressing your argument. One proof convinces one person, another proof convinces another person. I should think, however, that the proof which would best convince critical and keen minds is the one based on the nature of a spiritual substance, which being immaterial has no possibility of perishing, since it has no parts and hence is incapable of separation and destruction. Besides, this proof is a direct challenge to one who denies that the soul is spiritual, because in arguing against its spirituality he uses ideas, and

ideas are the proof that the soul is spiritual, and consequently immortal.

I agree with you that is the best proof, but I shall be able to use the others to very good advantage.

Of course, for Christians none of these proofs are necessary since they have a stronger reason for believing in immortality than the sublimest human reason can present.

The Divine Founder of Christianity has proclaimed the immortality of the soul to be a fact. He, the Creator, certainly knows the nature of His own creation. He has, moreover, declared the great worth of the soul, affirming that it out-values the whole material world. The world and its substance will eventually pass away, but the soul will last as long as God. The greatest proof for the value of the soul is that the Son of God gave His life for its salvation. Man's life on earth is brief. It is a period of probation during which he has the opportunity of becoming a partaker of the Divine nature. Provided that end is attained everything else matters very little. As Christ Himself said: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (*Mark*, viii, 36)

Those are very significant and solemn words. They make an added impression on my mind now that I realize more than ever the sublime nature and destiny of the human soul.



Let me conclude the subject by a reflection which occurred to me some years ago when I beheld a mountain whose top was covered by perpetual snow. That snow, whence did it come? It seems strange to say that it came from the ocean, yet that was its origin. The sun's rays heated the surface of the ocean causing it to rise as vapor to the upper regions of the air. There it gradually condensed, forming a cloud. Thence it was wafted toward the land. Gradually in the cold upper atmosphere it got heavier and heavier until it condensed into water and descended as drops through the cold higher air. Passing through this cold region the drops became crystallized into flakes and as snow rested on the mountain top. There it remained for a short period. Gradually its weight and the sun's rays lower down the mountain caused it to liquify underneath and as trickles of water to flow down the mountain side, first as a tiny stream, then as it gathered volume from other streams as a rivulet, later as a torrent, and finally, as on its way it received added volume, as a mighty river emptying into the ocean whence it came.

Man's life is like that snow which for a brief period rested on the mountain top. Man comes from God as his origin, dwells for a short space of time as a mortal, and again returns to God whence he originated. The years of life are brief but on these few years depend the endless ages of eternity.

The Maker of man endowed him with free will, which if he uses right will enable him to share the very life and bliss of his Maker. "As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God" (*John* i, 12). That is the end of man if he

does his part. For in the words of Saint Augustine: "God Who made us without our cooperation will not save us without our cooperation."

The soul is a precious jewel, to guard which no effort is too strenuous, no sacrifice too great.

I see that you do not rest content with knowledge of the soul but endeavor to make the knowledge practical.

Yes. For it matters little if we know what the soul is but neglect to act on the knowledge. The nature of man's soul proclaims his eternal destiny, and the wisdom of man's intellect proclaims that eternal welfare is his greatest concern.

In proportion as mankind generally realizes the nature and importance of the soul will this be a better place to live in. The fact that man has an immortal soul not only gives him a dignity which makes him the masterpiece of visible creation, but also furnishes him with a motive for living in a manner worthy of his sublime dignity.

The immortality of the soul is not only a pledge of perpetual existence but is, moreover, a reality which if kept in mind will most surely make that existence an eternity of perfect happiness.

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