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**HAVE
YOU A
SOUL?**

by DANIEL A. LORD, S. J.

A Queen's Work Publication

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Have You a Soul?

by

DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.

“I’ve just had a horrible thought.”

Bradley père from his vantage point before the large fireplace surveyed the group of his intimates, confident that this utterance would create a sensation.

Sue Bradley, one of the twins, giggled disrespectfully. She loved to see her father dramatize himself. No man could resist the temptation to self-dramatization when he stood with a real log fire behind him and the right sympathetic audience in front of him, and tonight the audience was both right and sympathetic.

There was Mrs. Bradley, who had through the years cultivated a charming receptivity to her husband’s conversation. There was Dick, the other twin, who sat with his back against the huge lounge and let himself be pleasantly hypnotized by the snap of the burning logs. There were the McDermotts and the Fosters, who, peacefully relaxed, sat sipping their after-dinner coffee—old friends, who dined with the Bradleys almost every second month, friends with whom conversation was pleasant and the interchange of experiences both casual and intimate.

And in a deep corner of the lounge, his face restfully turned toward the fire, was Father Hall, who had come to town for a week’s negotiations with his publisher.

Horrible Thought

“Yes,” said the senior Bradley, for he saw that his line had fallen on alert ears, and he was quite willing to repeat it, “I’ve just had a horrible thought.”

“My darling,” his wife cried, in mock sympathy, “do say an ejaculation.”

“Wrong guess,” he said, swaying on his heels in approved master-of-the-house fashion. (A pity, mused Sue, that he isn’t wearing tails; he could put his hands under them and flap them after the fashion of an English duke in a Broadway comedy of manners.) “In fact horrible as the thought is, it borders on the devotional.”

“That’s your field, Father Hall.” Kevin McDermott, who looked like a matured tennis champion and was a tobacco broker, laughed. “Tell Father Hall your horrible thought,” he said to Mr. Bradley, in mock-patronizing tones.

The rest of the group clamored to hear it, and Mr. Bradley accepted this as proof that he was playing his scene well.

Not at All Sure

“Well,” he explained, “all my life I’ve been trying to save my soul. And it just occurred to me that I’m really not sure that I have a soul.”

“Darling!” cried his wife, in quick protest. “You’re one of the biggest-souled men in the world.”

He bowed elaborately.

“Trust my wife to say just the right thing,” he said, with an all-inclusive gesture. “But — if I may be permitted an aphorism—to flatter my disposition is not to appeal to my brain. And I’m darned if I know whether or not I have a soul.”

Evan Foster waved a coffee spoon in the direction of Father Hall.

“You’re just wasting your time exhorting this doubting brother to guard against the loss of his soul.”

Not Doubts

“Hey!” protested Mr. Bradley, “don’t get me wrong. I don’t doubt that I have a soul; in fact I’m convinced that I have one. What I meant was this: If anybody stopped me in the streets and said, ‘Look here, old man, how do you go about proving that you have a soul?’ I’d be as dumb as a

turtle. Of course I have a soul. And Father Hall has convinced me that I ought to save the doggone thing. . . .”

“Better not tie that adjective to your soul,” cautioned Sheila Foster. “Sounds too much like—”

Vicious Circle

Her husband raised a warning hand.

“You may skip telling us what it sounds like, honey,” he said. “We all got it.”

Mrs. Bradley stepped into the situation with her usual firmness.

“Doesn’t the Bible prove that we have a soul?” she asked. “Didn’t Our Lord tell us to save our souls? Didn’t He die so that we wouldn’t lose them? That’s enough to satisfy me.”

Her husband fixed her with a stern, reproving eye.

“There you go, arguing in a vicious circle.”

“Darling,” she protested, “the circles in which I move are delightful and not in the least bit vicious.”

“This one is vicious,” retorted her husband. “You use the Bible to prove that you have a soul by declaring that the Bible tells you that you ought to save your soul. A equals B because B clearly equals A.”

“I don’t get it,” said Mrs. Bradley, emphatically.

“We do,” cried Sue, who had exchanged a quick glance with her twin.

“What’s more,” added Dick, “dad’s absolutely right. I’ll bet that if anybody asked me to prove that I have a soul I’d start stuttering like a telegraph key. And so”—he cast a sweeping glance of accusation about the group around the fireplace—“would the rest of you.”

Just Accept It

“I didn’t know that you had to prove that you have a soul.” Alma McDermott was very puzzled. “I just accept the fact. Why should you want to prove it?”

"Because," explained Bradley, "so darn many people think that they have no soul. At least they say that they haven't." He turned abruptly to Father Hall. "Materialists is what they're called, isn't it, father?"

The priest nodded in agreement. "Large sections of what we call civilized nations and many a professor of psychology think that a soul is as out of fashion as a banshee . . . and just as fictitious."

"Oh," inserted Shelia Foster, who tried hard to live up to the Irish in her name and her blood, "I believe in banshees. I had an old aunt who—"

"Don't get started on banshees," interrupted her husband. He looked at the group in appeal. "If she starts telling you about that aunt that used to take tea with the good little people and was on intimate terms with a leprechaun, she'll never let us get back to talking about souls."

Confusion Compounded

Kevin McDermott stirred his coffee thoughtfully.

"I had that same thought about souls some years ago. I suddenly realized that if anybody backed me into a corner and demanded that I prove that I had a soul—or else—I'd be obliged to accept the or else. So I looked up some books on the subject. Lord, what a muddle they threw me into! The Catholic books seemed the worst to me. They all started off, not by proving to me that I had a soul, but by proving to me that the fellows who said that I didn't have a soul were all cuckoo. And by the time I was half finished reading about the things that these non-Catholics hold and don't hold, I was the guy that was cuckoo."

His voice was so despairful that they all laughed in sympathy.

"What a lot of junk I waded through!" he said, ruefully. "It seems that one set of people say that I haven't any soul at all and another set say that I'm nothing but a soul."

"My big, husky man nothing but a ghostly soul?" his wife almost shrieked. "How horrible!"

All Kinds of Souls

"A lot of 'em seemed to think that there was no such thing as an individual soul but that the world was full of one big soul that flowed through our brains as water flows through faucets."

"Explaining water on the brain?" wisecracked Evan Foster. The rest of the group groaned him into silence.

"Some said that thought was merely a nerve vibration," Kevin continued, "and some said that thought was a manifestation of a world soul. Some said that we thought only about words and not about universal ideas. I was dizzy when I'd finished reading the truck, and I'll be darned if I ever reached the point where an author proved that I have a soul. Of course I quit. So when our host begins wondering whether or not he has a soul, I'm in the same boat."

The group lapsed into a moment's silence. It really did seem silly to think that while they, like all good Catholics, were busy trying to save their souls, in the face of the thousands of people who claimed that there were no such things as souls they couldn't even prove that they had a soul.

Seems Silly

Was there any logical proof that the soul existed? Or did they simply have to take God's word for it?

Mr. Bradley walked across the room and sat down in an easy chair. He was the stage manager; he had set the stage for the act that he hoped would follow. He was the actor who had rung up the curtain with a mighty good speech and who was now content to let someone else take center stage. He was above all else the puzzled Catholic who had been made to realize that he was ignorant about a subject that worried him and left him decidedly troubled. So he had tossed the problem into the hands of his good friend Father Hall. Let the priest, who sat pleasantly relaxed, the light of the fire playing brightly across one side of his keen, alert face, solve the problem.

Not Surprised

Father Hall held a match to the large bowl of his pipe. He was among friends who understood his after-dinner preference for his pipe and his disdain of his host's expensive cigars. He drew the smoke into his mouth appreciatively; then he flicked out the flame of the match.

"I'm not surprised," he began.

"Not surprised at what?" demanded Kevin McDermott.

"Not surprised that no one in this crowd of educated Catholics could in a pinch prove that he has a soul. Of course one of these days Dick and Sue will be studying in their Catholic-college psychology class the proofs for the existence of the soul. But I'm sometimes amazed when I realize how many people there are who get callouses on their knees, saving souls whose existence they accept on faith, and how many there are who have never even stopped to wonder whether they could prove from reason that they have a soul to save. It's one of the startling phenomena of Catholic thinking. Or shall we call it Catholic lack of thinking?"

"Everyone in the group stirred uncomfortably, even though Father Hall's voice was entirely without reproach. Their guilty consciences were prodding them.

Can It Be Proved?

"Can it be proved from reason that we have a soul?" put in Alma McDermott, timidly.

"Certainly it can be proved," came back Father Hall. The Bible is built up around the fact of a human soul. Genesis recounts the story of God's breathing into the newly-formed body of man 'a living soul,' thus making him in the image of his maker. The Gospels end with the stories of Christ's sending the Apostles into the whole world to save souls and to bring them into the eternal kingdom of heaven, where, while the bodies lay sleeping in the earth, the souls would be endlessly happy . . . 'this day . . . with me in paradise.' From beginning to end the Bible accepts the soul as the second great reality. The first reality is God; the second is the human soul.

“But that’s only the beginning—or rather, to put it more accurately, it’s a mere confirmation of something that men would know and understand about themselves even if there were no Bible. You see, human history is certainly clear on at least this one point: The vast majority of all men of all times have believed that they have something that is beyond and above and independent of—to some extent—the body.

Separated by Death

“The fact of death was and is inescapable. Even the primitives, the Egyptians and the Assyrians and the prehistoric men and the American Indians, laid their dead in some kind of grave. But though the bodies were dead and though everyone had learned from grim and often unpleasant experience how swiftly bodies decayed and became once more part of the earth, none of these people thought that with burial came the end of their dear relatives and friends. Somewhere in another world these dead continued to exist; somewhere they could eat the food that was placed on their graves or could hunt and talk or could enjoy some sort of paradise or would be punished in some sort of hell.

“The dead bodies were there, rotting; that was obvious. But something that was not the body was judged because it was the more important part of a man, the part that had been responsible for his goodness or his badness.

Various Names

“Perhaps not all of these people called this something a soul. But all of them—from the cave men to the pagans of modern Jamaica, who ‘capture’ the souls of their dead in little boxes as they depart from the dead bodies—all men were convinced that there was something in a man that was not his body, something that was superior to his body—and so independent of his body that after the body was dead that something went on living a life that was even more complete than the life it had lived while it was incased in the body. In fact that something was so tremendously important that it was punished or rewarded according as the man lived a bad or a good life.

"Evidently this something was the thing that made man man.

"So you see, belief in souls is a historic tradition. The Bible is meaningless unless souls do exist . . . as human history would be meaningless, and human self-analysis."

Mr. Bradley shook his head.

"Oh we've given up believing in so many things in which people always used to believe . . . fairies and ghosts and the sun's moving round the earth. . . . That argument doesn't impress me too much."

Father Hall nodded in partial agreement.

They Made Other Mistakes, So . . .

"The fact that a great many people agree on a thing doesn't necessarily prove that the thing is right, unless . . ."

He paused deliberately and dramatically to catch their attention, and he pierced that attention with a gesture of his forefinger.

". . . unless their reasons for agreeing on it are compelling, satisfactory reasons."

They all seemed very full of thought. Even Dick and Sue puckered their young brows in an effort at serious reasoning. Father Hall gave them time to think.

"Then you believe," asked Mrs. Bradley at last, unable to stand the too-protracted silence, "that in the case of the soul the reasons were satisfactory?"

Clear Observation

"Exactly," replied Father Hall. "You see, long before there were laboratories, men did quite a bit of observing. Sometimes I'm inclined to think that men did more observing along some lines before the invention of microscopes than men have done since they've had microscopes. But don't say that I said so."

"We'll tell all our friends the first chance we get," cried Sue. "You're just an old fogey who doesn't believe in science."

"Doesn't believe in every scientist," corrected the priest. "Science is wonderful. But often scientists are men who know so much about one thing that they are absolutely blind to everything else."

He drew in on his pipe and slowly exhaled a ghostlike cloud of smoke.

Different From Animals

"Well it didn't take a heap of acute observing to make men—even very primitive men—realize that they were more than a little different from the animals around them. The tiger might be far more powerful physically than men were; but men had something inside themselves, some cleverness, some mastery of skill, that let them outwit the tiger that could knock them cold with a biff of its paw. Men could build traps. They might be afraid to meet a gorilla in the jungles, but they would have hooted at the suggestion that some gorilla was sitting down in a cave and drawing on the walls pictures of men. Men drew pictures of gorillas; by no stretch of fancy could they imagine gorillas' drawing pictures of men.

"Men found that they had within themselves the power to learn to do almost anything that they saw the animals do. But the animals learned nothing from men." Men were not so swift as was the deer, but men could outwit and kill the deer. The elephant could crush a man with his trunk or his forefoot, but a man could dominate an elephant and force him into slavery. The bird's nest was a masterpiece of adaptation, but men learned to build houses and temples and palaces that were not only highly serviceable but extraordinarily beautiful. And if anyone had suggested to a primitive tribe that it should invite an ape to sit as a fellow counselor, or train a dog to act as court physician, or have a chimpanzee as troubadour of the tribe, or make a beaver the official architect, the men of that tribe would have laughed boisterous, savage laughter.

"Animals, they knew, were different from men. Animals lacked something that men had. And that something lifted man so high above the entire kingdom of animals—strong, fleet, beautiful, clever though those animals were—that be-

tween a man and an animal there was no possibility of equality.

Not Their Bodies

“Now these men were shrewd enough to realize that this superiority was not in their bodies. The deer could outrace any man. The elephant could outwork him. Unarmed, man dared not meet the lion or the gorilla. His hair was not so beautiful as was the plumage of the bird of paradise. His skin could not resist heat and cold and the darts of an enemy as could the skin of a hippo. No it was not man’s body that made him different. Then what was it?

“They argued quite logically—or so it seems to me—that if it wasn’t their bodies that made the difference it was something beyond their bodies, something that they possessed in addition to their bodies, something the animals didn’t have. They called it their soul, or they gave it some other name. But whatever they called it, it was the thing that made them men and, making them men, made them masters.

“All you and I have to do is watch a man and an animal tackle any problem or meet in any sort of competition in which the man can use his full manhood and his complete abilities, and we are very much inclined to think that these old ancestors of ours were pretty smart.

What a Difference!

“In fact I never read that some materialistic scientist is working to prove that there is no essential difference between a man and a monkey without thinking, ‘My friend, I’ll really be impressed when I hear that a monkey has set out to prove conclusively that there is no difference between a monkey and a man.’ Our interest in monkeys is so different from the monkey’s lack of interest in us that that in itself is almost enough to prove that we are superior to monkeys.”

Bradley, their host, was waiting to object.

“Of course animals and men are different,” he said. “Man’s brain is more complicated than that of an animal. We’re different, we human beings, because our structure is more elaborate. A monkey is more elaborate than a clam.

An ape is more elaborate than an ant. And we are more elaborate than any of the animals. Doesn't that elaborate-ness explain our superiority? Why drag in a metaphysical thing like a soul?"

A Principle

"Dear! dear!" sighed Father Hall. "You say metaphysical as if it were a nasty word. You've been reading the wise-cracking unbelievers, my lad. They don't like the word metaphysical. But metaphysical is just a term that we apply to those things that we can't touch or see. Liberty is something that nobody ever saw. It's metaphysical; but believe me it's a mighty important thing. Principles are metaphysical. Do you know what we mean here by a principle?"

They didn't answer immediately. It sounded like a trick question. Mr. Bradley took the lead.

"Evidently we're not supposed to know. So just go ahead and explain."

Examples

Father Hall pulled on his pipe.

"Let's fumble around for some examples," he said, looking just a little embarrassed. "I really should have been given a little time to get all this in order," he continued. "When a man hasn't studied psychology for almost twenty years . . ."

"No apologies," cried Sue.

"And no alibis," jibed Dick.

"My pals!" The priest groaned and threw up his hands in mock despair.

"Some examples," prompted Mrs. Bradley.

"All right. Let's say that a crowd of people, strangers to one another, are sitting in a railroad station. All of a sudden a number of things go wrong. A woman faints. A locomotive throttle refuses to budge. A man sitting on a bench grabs his forehead and enthusiastically starts to scribble on a piece of paper. Two men wax hot in argument. One hits the other, and a third man runs up and collars the first two."

"Sounds like the last reel of a mystery movie," murmured Sue.

You Watch

"You are sitting in the station too," continued Father Hall, ignoring the interruption. "You know no one there. You are simply watching. As the woman faints, a man runs up to her, pulls a stethoscope out of his pocket and expertly uses it, gives her something to drink, deftly manipulates her muscles, and presto! the woman is revived. What do you conclude about the man?"

"Obviously he's a doctor," cried Alma McDermott.

"All right. Let's continue. When word comes that the locomotive throttle is stuck, a man jumps up, climbs into the cab, monkeying with a few gadgets, and lo! the throttle works. He is . . ."

". . . an engineer," supplied Sheila Foster.

"Let me continue," interposed Sue. "The man who runs up to the men that are arguing is a detective."

"Correct. And if another man appears on the scene and offers to get them uncollared . . ."

"He's a lawyer."

". . . if he isn't a prominent politician with a drag at the city hall." Evan Foster was highly ironic.

Judged by Results

"In other words," said Father Hall, "we don't know enough about what this last chap did or how he did it to be able to tell what he is. But in the other cases you knew precisely what each man was from watching . . ."

". . . what he did." Mrs. Bradley filled in the blank with an air of embarrassment. It seemed so simple.

"That's right. But note: You did not see the doctor's medical knowledge; you just saw the man practicing medicine. You did not see the engineer's mechanical ability; you simply saw the man successfully monkeying with a machine.

And monkeying is a very poor word there. For all the possible monkeying that a monkey could do wouldn't get the machine fixed. The policeman made an arrest, but he couldn't show you or the fighting pair his authority. And nobody could see the lawyer's legal knowledge or the politician's pull. You didn't have to see those things. You saw what we call an effect, something done. You knew what was the cause of that effect—and that cause was the knowledge, skill, special ability of each man. That is roughly what we mean by a principle. Get it?"

How About the Writer?

They all nodded.

"Now let's do a little looking at the way that some other things work."

"Hey!" interrupted Dick. "What about the chap who grabbed his head and started to write."

"You," answered the priest, "picked up the paper that he eventually threw away."

"Dick being nose-y as usual," said Sue.

"And it was a scrap of lovely poetry obviously original," added the priest.

"From the moment he grabbed his forehead," Dick muttered, "I knew he was a poet." And to Father Hall, "Sorry for the interruption. What are we looking at now?"

"Just a group or cluster of bodies, various kinds of them. In the visible world we have a wide range to pick from, haven't we? Everything from pebbles to philosophers, from geraniums to germs to gems, from orchids to oysters, from crystals to butterflies—"

Bodies

"Oh," cried Sue, "what happened to our alliteration?"

"Sorry," Father Hall corrected himself: "from crystals to crypts and crustaceans."

“Excellent!” applauded the twins.

“Now let’s choose a few from this varied range of bodies and make a picture.

“A rock lies under a wide-reaching tree on the side of a hill. Near it sheep are feeding. On the rock sits a shepherd watching his sheep, counting the profits he’ll make when the ewes have lambed and out of the joy of his heart singing a song of his own contriving.”

“What ho! Watteau!” was Kevin McDermott’s contribution.

Pastoral

“So whether they were assembled by a pastoral painter or by our imagination, we have in one spot a rock, a tree, sheep, and a shepherd. Each of these is quite obviously very different from the others. The rock is being slowly corroded by the passing storms and the heat of the sun; it is, as we say, inanimate. The sheep browse about; they feed on the grass, which by the power of their digestion is turned into flesh and bone and the curling wool upon their backs. They will breed lambs that will be reproductions of themselves, complete in all details. And if these sheep have some accident or other, a little care and nursing will restore their health.

“Over them hangs the beautiful tree. Its roots reach far down into the soil, and the chemical elements that it pulls out of the earth are incorporated into its growing branches. It drops acorns to the ground, and these acorns are capable of becoming other trees. An ax may damage its bark; but if the damage is not too great, the wound will heal and the tree will continue to thrive.

Sheep and Shepherd

“Yet the sheep have things which the tree doesn’t have. The sheep recognize their master when he calls. They have a thousand instincts that they exercise without training or experience of any sort. They move about under the impulse of cold and heat and hunger and the desire for water. They follow their master with the fidelity of Mary’s famous lamb.

“Finally we come to the man. He is a poet at heart, a maker of songs. He sees the sheep as a means to make money, and for that reason he has decided to breed them. He sits in the shade and thinks of profit, of God, of the sheep he’ll have ten years from now (sheep that have no present existence), of love and beauty—the while he creates a new song out of the sounds that he’s heard around him.”

Enter the Cat

While Father Hall was talking, a sleek Persian cat wandered into the living room. The cat moved toward Mrs. Bradley and with a spring was in her lap and curled purring on her knee.

“Why bother,” the priest said, suddenly, “with imaginary pictures? Everyone please look at Mrs. Bradley.”

“Easy assignment,” said her husband, gallantly.

“How nice,” she murmured. “I’m either Exhibit A, laboratory experiment number 26, or the center of the stage.”

“You are a charming proof for the existence of the soul,” said the priest. He looked around at the guests. “There is the beautiful chair in which Mrs. Bradley is sitting; there is the corsage of roses that she is wearing; there is the purring cat on her knee; and there is our hostess herself.

“That comes close to being a fair summary of the visible world:

“The inanimate world—the chair.

“The vegetable world—the roses.

“The animal world—the cat.

“The world of human beings—our hostess herself.”

They laughingly applauded the picture, and Mrs. Bradley looked immensely pleased.

Ninety-Eight Cents' Worth

Father Hall continued.

"Now as for the chemical elements that go to make up the human parts of our two pictures—the shepherd on the hillside and the hostess in the midst of her guests—there is not a great deal of difference. You remember the old chemical analysis of a man, don't you? The fat in his body would make half a dozen bars of soap; the sulphur would furnish heads for a box of matches; the chalk would whitewash a chicken coop; the iron would make a tenpenny nail. I think the total value of my body, chemically speaking, is about ninety-eight cents."

"Horrible!" murmured Sheila Foster.

"If that were all that there was to it, it would be horrible. And according to the men who deny that man has a soul, that is all, and it is horrible."

Not the Same

The priest held up his hand emphatically.

"But all you have to do is study the various kinds of objects, and you'll see that they are not the same and that chemistry cannot explain the whole of man. The rock is explained by inorganic chemistry. Rocks are acted upon; they do not act. There is no principle in them to make them act. Dirt may pile on a rock and make it larger, but the rock does not feed on that earth. If a rock is cracked or smashed, it stays broken. By no stretch of the imagination can you conceive of a little chip off a rock taking root and growing into another large rock. Nor can you conceive of the rock's giving birth to a litter of little stones while it itself remains unchanged.

Alive

"Let's glance at the tree under which the sheep are pasturing. That tree does things that the rock cannot possibly do. We say that it falls within the field of organic chemistry. The tree grows by taking into itself chemicals that it makes part of itself. It has the power to heal its own

wounds if those wounds are not fatal—as when some lover carves a heart and initials in its side, or when an automobile crashes into it and destroys branches and bark. Finally the tree drops seeds that are capable of becoming like the tree from which they fell.

“What is true of the rock is true of the chair in which our hostess sits. And what is true of the tree was true of our hostess’s roses until they were picked from their bush.

“Now let’s look at the sheep. The grass that they eat, they make part of themselves. A cut they receive from a barbed-wire fence is healed by the quick action of their own blood. And in time they will be nuzzling the little lambs that they have developed inside their bodies.

“Again what is true of the sheep is true of the cat.

Instinct

“Did you notice that cat enter the room, move toward the fire, single out his mistress—though she is wearing a new dress that he perhaps never saw before—and go where he knew he’d be petted and played with? Did you ever see a cat stalk a mouse? or hunt a bird? or protect its newborn kittens? or do any of the thousand other things that we call instinctive? Did you ever see an ant build its city? an oriole build its nest? a duck find its way from the north to the far south? a dog sniff his master and fawn upon him? a bear go into his hole for the winter?

“We maintain that these things that a tree does but that a stone cannot do show that the tree is alive and the stone dead. There is a life principle in the tree which makes the tree capable of actions that a stone could never perform. We see that cats and sheep have instincts that no tree or plant possesses. Hence there is some principle in animals that makes them different from vegetation. We watch effects, and we see that those in the animal are so different from those in vegetation that we conclude that the cause must be different. We recognize the doctor’s medical knowledge by watching him act. We recognize the life principle in a tree by observing the effects in that tree. When we watch a dog in action, we know that a dog differs from a tree. And in each case we come to know the cause from the effects we see. Remember

that a principle really means a source, a cause, a beginning. Clear?"

Easy to See, But . . .

They all seemed to take a deep breath. Father Hall laughed with them. The thing was fundamentally simple, the sort of thing one recognized just by looking at it. It was not easy to make easy things seem easier. Anybody looking at a lizard knew that it was different from a rosebush, just as the cow surely was different from the moon over which it jumped, and Jack's dog was different from the beanstalk that Jack climbed.

Father Hall wondered whether he had made it clear that chemically these apparently different things were not vastly different. Yet what they did was so different that some essential principle in each of them must make them different—the rosebush different from the rock, the lizard very different from the rosebush it used for its sunny promenades.

"May I go on?" he asked, at last.

They nodded.

We Come to Man

"Looking at the shepherd on the rock and, more pleasantly, at Mrs. Bradley here, we find that both of them are capable of things that we never even vaguely associate with an animal, much less with a rock, a rose, or an oak tree."

Mr. Bradley nodded in agreement. "Do you know of a rock or a rose that ever threw a dish at its husband's guiltless head?"

"How vulgar!" protested his wife. "Anyhow if I had done any throwing, I can assure you that the head would not have been guiltless."

"Keep family squabbles out of this," ordered McDermott, with authority. "Imagine any wife's throwing plates at a husband's head and not hitting somebody else."

"Never mind them, father," said Mrs. Bradley. "Tell me what I do that makes me so different."

"Not merely so different, Mrs. Bradley, but so different from rocks, roses, and the cat in your lap. The things you

do are really very much the same as the things other human beings do.

All and More

“You have first of all the essential chemicals of the mineral kingdom.

“You have the power to grow and heal and produce offspring like yourself, all of which is characteristic of the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom too.

“You have instincts that are like the instincts of the dog and the cat.

“But everything that you have beyond that is different.

“For you are capable of thinking.”

“I’m glad you saved it by the word capable,” said Mr. Bradley.

“You have free will,” continued Father Hall. “You find in your soul a divine discontent. And you are by nature a creator. You want to create things, fashion things, be an artist, a builder of anything from a knitted sweater to a great novel, from a glass of jelly to an airplane, from a suit to a symphony, from a miniature to a house of which you will be mistress.

“And these things make you very, very different from any mere animal that pastures in the fields or walks the roads or haunts the jungles of earth.

The Something More

“And because even the simplest and most primitive men have realized in themselves divine discontent and the desire to improve on earth, men have always known that they were different. That is why they were so sure that their body, which is akin to that of the animal, was not all. That is why they knew that they had some principle which produced the effects that we call thinking, willing, improving, creating. That is why men were so sure that they had a soul.”

Suddenly Kevin McDermott began to talk, and the conversation became general. Kevin spoke of the Egyptian hieroglyphics that he had seen in the Smithsonian, particu-

larly the little soul of a man being weighed in a balance scale by the god of the dead. His wife supplemented this by recalling that she had heard somewhere that the Greeks thought the soul to be located in the brain, "living there in a kind of advanced penthouse," she suggested. Evan Foster recalled out of some faint memory of his Latin studies that soul and spirit were not the same word, and that spirit originally meant wind. And Dick added that *anima*, also a Latin word for soul, originally meant breeze.

Soul and Breath

"That's not too difficult to explain," said Father Hall. "The Greeks and the Romans both knew that at the moment of death the principle by which the body thought, willed, was discontent, and was capable of creation departed. Its departure was precisely what made the body dead and hence different from a living body. They noticed that at the very end there was a final sigh, a sort of last breath, like the passing of a wind from the mouth of the dying man. That, they thought, might be the soul departing. So they used to signify soul by both *spiritus* and *anima*, a natural enough mistake but a rather beautiful one. At least it indicates very clearly that these early people were sure that something in them was beyond and different from the body."

"But of course they were wrong," was Kevin McDermott's comment. "And since they were wrong about the thing that makes man different, isn't it possible that they were wrong about man's being different at all?"

Father Hall shook his head.

"They knew from what man did that he must have something that distinguishes him from other creatures that have bodies not much unlike his own, some principle . . ."

What Makes It Work?

Little Mrs. McDermott sighed wistfully.

"That principle you talk about . . . it's not clear to me."

They could feel Father Hall rummaging around in his mind for some comparison. The quick light that flashed in his eyes told them that he had found it.

“A number of years ago the magician Hermann the Great had a marvelous clock. It was made of transparent glass with a brass pivot in the center. Around the edges of the face were figures that ran like the figures of any clock, from one to twelve. Hermann would take a minute hand and stick it on the pivot. Then the audience was asked to mention any date in history—let’s say someone mentioned October 17, 1833. Hermann spun the minute hand; and when it stopped, it pointed to the number that corresponded to the day of the week on which that date had fallen.

“Anyone watching that clock knew very clearly that the glass and the brass couldn’t make a calculation like that. I saw the clock at close range and could see nothing that might point to an explanation of how it worked. Yet it demanded that someone do a fairly complicated bit of calendar research. Therefore it was someone with a mind that had to stop that hand at the right number. Who? What?

Too Simple

“The trick didn’t hold its place on Hermann’s program very long, because it really was too simple. Off stage there was an assistant who had before him the necessary information and charts. He also had a series of electrical connections, one attached to each of the numbers. A person in the audience shouted out a date. As Hermann placed the minute hand on the pivot, the assistant consulted the proper chart and found the correct day of the week. Hermann spun the hand. The assistant touched the connection that shot electricity into the correct number. And by the power of electromagnetism the hand was stopped dead on the correct number.”

“How ridiculously simple!” exclaimed Mrs. Foster.

“Yes isn’t it? But the audience saw only the glass-and-brass clock. They had to argue to a principle that they could not see, a principle that did two things: From a given date it calculated the day on which that date fell, and it exercised some force that stopped the clock.”

“Don’t look at me when you say that stopped-the-clock stuff,” thundered the host.

It Needed a Principle

"We'll ignore that outburst," said Father Hall, mildly. "The audience knew that glass and brass can't reason, calculate, or will. So there *had* to be some principle—even though they didn't know what it was—that thought and willed. Simple, but no more simple than the reasoning process that taught men that chemical elements however complicated don't think or will, and that there must be some principle capable of performing these extremely difficult processes."

"Then," said Mr. Bradley, feeling that because he had started all this he should come into the picture seriously, "all men, looking at their own bodies and comparing them with the nonthinking stone, the nonfeeling tree, the nonrational animal, argued that they themselves must surely have a principle that thought and willed, was not part of their body, and lived even after their body had died. Is that right?"

"That is right," agreed Father Hall.

"Interesting," continued Mr. Bradley, "but that still doesn't prove anything, does it? There may be other explanations.

The Process Called Thinking

"Just a minute," said Father Hall. "Let's look at this process called thinking."

"This is going to be a novel experience for my wife," jibed Evan Foster.

"Darling," retorted his wife, "as long as there's a powerful mind like yours in the family, I can feel free to devote myself to the sole business of being beautiful."

"Modest little thing, isn't she?" demanded Mr. Foster of the company in general.

"Go on with your thinking processes," urged Mrs. Bradley.

The Writer at Work

"Let's say," resumed Father Hall, "that a writer is sitting at his desk deep in the process of creating a book. Now

creating is hardly the correct word, for creating means making something out of nothing—”

“—whereas too many writers make nothing out of something,” broke in Kevin McDermott, who evidently didn’t like some of the modern writers.

“No. That’s not what I was going to say,” countered Father Hall. “A writer doesn’t make something out of nothing, but he does make something out of a good many other somethings. Writing a book is a most elaborate process. The author draws on his memory; he uses some of his own experiences; he refers to books that he has read and observes the actions of people in various localities; he puts together words the meanings of which he has learned in a thousand different ways. And when he is finished, this one man has built out of a thousand different sources a unit which is his book.

“That’s a pretty elaborate process. We can reduce it to something that looks simpler but really isn’t. Will somebody here give me a sentence?”

Wanted: a Sentence

They all thought elaborately. You could almost hear the wheels going round.

Mr. Bradley walked over to the table and picked up the evening newspaper. He turned to the editorial page.

“How’s this?” he demanded. He read aloud: “‘Man’s liberty is so much the white light of his life, the greatest gift of God, that we feel like crying aloud, “Let’s fight for it’!” ”

They all applauded the oratorical way in which he had read it.

“Dad ought to run for Congress,” whispered Sue, audibly.

“Senate or nothing,” retorted her twin.

“Excellent,” cried the priest. And with that remarkable memory that he sometimes displayed, he repeated the sentence verbatim.

“‘Man’s liberty is so much the white light of his life, the greatest gift of God, that we feel like crying aloud, “Let’s fight for it’!” ”

They all began to meditate on the sentence.

“Now,” said the priest, “the human brain is not unlike an intricate filing case. Into the various sections a man slips the experiences of his life—sounds, colors, nouns, verbs, pleasures, motor reflexes that he has developed through practice. Part of his brain is working while he is talking; another part works when he walks. The brain is so compartmented that injury to it often results in queer twists. One small sector of the brain is hurt, and suddenly the man can’t distinguish colors, or he loses the power to recall nouns.”

Pigeonholes

“Like Alice in the mysterious woods,” interposed Sue. She couldn’t even remember the noun tree. Remember?”

“Sh-sh!” hissed her twin, and she shushed.

“Really the brain is like a desk full of pigeonholes; and the more the specialists come to know about the brain, the better are they able to localize in definite sections definite types of memories, experiences, factual data, and the like.

“Let’s go back to our author for a minute. Let’s say that he is sitting before a desk that has pigeonholes. His filing cabinets are along the wall. He keeps notebooks in which he jots down names, descriptions, bits of unusual conversations that he means to use in his book. Let’s watch him: He pulls some notes out of a cubbyhole, he roots around until he gets precisely what he wants out of a file; he thumbs through his notebooks in search of data; he goes to his library and jerks a quotation out of a book.

“Then he, the one person, puts all this together and makes the one, unified, coherent, logical book, a book so uniquely his own that we can, by observing its style, know precisely who wrote it.

Quite a Process

“Let’s take that sentence again. It’s really an excellent one. To put that sentence together, the man who wrote it and we who understood it had to pull a good many things out of our minds.

“First we pulled out some nouns: man, liberty, light, life, gift, God, and so on.

“Then from another part of our brain we jerked the color white and our experience with light.

“From our auditory memory, our memory of sounds, we pulled the idea of crying aloud.

“We have never seen God, but we pulled out a concept of Him.

“And finally we issued a call to battle, to do something about it, to get the good old will in operation: ‘Let’s fight for it!’”

“Why!” cried Sheila Foster, “I hadn’t any idea that that sentence had so much in it.”

“Trust me to find a good one, just the right one in fact,” boasted her host.

Packed

Father Hall looked at them with a sharply questioning glance.

“Our author was the only one who compiled all the data in his book. All right. Who compiled all the data that we’ve just checked over in that one sentence?”

“The writer of the editorial of course. And you and I.” Mrs. Bradley sounded just a little impatient.

“Which part of the author? Which part of you? From various parts of your brain, from various emotional experiences something pulled together into a single sentence the most varied ideas, concepts, brain phantasmas. Who? What?”

“Still a little foggy,” said Mrs. McDermott, wrinkling her brow.

Words Into Messages

“Let’s take another comparison,” said the priest. “You’ve seen teletype machines in telegraph offices. Over the wire comes a message. It is printed out word by word. It rolls out of the machine and into a basket. But it becomes a message only when someone picks it up and reads it, putting the words together to make a completed piece of news.

“All right. The words are lying around up there in your brain; phantasms, we call them. What power in you puts these phantasms together into a message? What power takes out of the different compartments of your brain experiences, colors, sounds, words, and so on, and unites them into one logical, intelligible message?”

“We call that power the soul. And unless you grant the existence of the soul, it is simply impossible to explain the fact that we can listen to or read separate words and unite them into a single clear sentence.

“But if we have a soul that acts like the author who pulls out of the filing cabinet of his brain memories, experiences, impressions, words, pictures, then everything is simple. The soul is the power by which we think. It is the principle of unity that pulls all our scattered experiences together into intelligible thoughts. It is the real author of our books and our sentences. It is the source of our intelligent thinking.”

Chemical Brain

“Hey!” demanded Evan Foster. “Why couldn’t it be the brain that does the thinking?”

“Why couldn’t the filing cabinet put the novel together without any help from the novelist?” countered Father Hall.

“That isn’t the same. The brain is alive. The filing cabinet is dead, inanimate,” answered Evan Foster.

“Our brain is still essentially a composite of chemicals,” emphasized Father Hall. “More than that: The various parts of the brain are very much parts, that is, they are separated one from another. There has to be some power, some faculty, that pulls together into one spot one sentence, one idea, one judgment or message that lies in these various parts. The author is the power that pulls the parts from his filing cabinets and makes his unified book. The soul is the power that unifies what lies in our brain, which is our very elaborate filing case.”

“I suppose that’s why while we say, ‘my heart beats’ and ‘my feet dance,’ we say simply, ‘I think,’” suggested Mr. Bradley.

"Correct."

"But we also say, 'I dance'," argued Dick.

"Quite right," said the priest. "Thinking is particularly applied to the soul, to the essential someone that is I. We don't say, 'my brain thinks.' But because the soul in man is the principle not only of his thought processes but of all his vital activities, the source of his natural life, we simply say, 'I dance' or 'I walk' and even 'I sleep,' though we know that it is primarily our feet that dance and walk and our body that sleeps."

Did You Ever See Liberty?

Father Hall wanted to get back to that sentence. With a little prayer of gratitude he wondered how it had happened that a chance glance at a newspaper had given him a sentence so to his purpose.

"By the way there were some rather remarkable words in that sentence," he prefaced.

They all looked surprised. It seemed to them that the words were as a matter of fact pretty commonplace, pretty much of the vocabulary of any fairly well-educated man.

"Let's take the word liberty," said Father Hall. "Did you, any of you, ever see liberty?"

"I saw the Goddess of Liberty when I returned from Europe," said Evan, lightly. "And did I love her!"

"Not the Goddess of Liberty. . . . Did you ever see just liberty? You've all seen free men; you live under free institutions; you boast that you have rights that nobody can take away from you. But liberty? freedom? rights? Did any of you ever see, taste, touch, smell, or hear liberty or freedom or rights?"

Unseen But Precious

Mr. Bradley looked thoroughly puzzled.

"Doggone it!" he muttered, "you're right. Nobody's ever seen liberty, but a lot of men have died for it."

"Everybody knows what freedom is," supplemented Evan Foster. "But you certainly can't stuff it and hang it in your library."

“Quite right. It’s amazing really. We human beings talk about, love, die for, and rate as most important in our lives things that nobody has ever seen, touched, heard, tasted, or smelled. We’ve seen free men, but never freedom. We know what our rights are, but we can’t lay our hands on them, even though we may lay down our lives for them. Our language is full of words that denote such ideas. Indeed those ideas are the most important, the most precious that we possess.

Beauty

“We know a beautiful woman when we see her, but we can’t see beauty as such. Beauty in a woman makes that woman beautiful. Beauty in itself is merely an idea. Honor is something that you find in honorable men; but nobody has ever seen honor. Justice, purity, the virtues of faith, hope, courage, nobility, uprightness, honesty . . . we could go on with that list forever. Really there’s no limit to the catalogue of things that are so important to us that we strive for them and die for them—even though we can’t lay our hands on them, no matter how hard we might try.”

“It seems to me,” protested Mr. Bradley, “that when I see an honorable man I see honor. When I visit a free country, I experience freedom.”

“All right. Go ahead and tell me what honor looks like. Tell me how freedom feels.”

“Why . . . I . . . oh . . . I see.” He suddenly grinned. “I can describe an honorable man. And I can tell you the effects of freedom. But you’re right. I can’t give you a picture of honor or of freedom.”

A Tough Point

The priest spread his hands as if accepting the admission as conclusive.

“I don’t see,” cried Mrs. Foster, with a slight pout, “exactly what this has to do with our souls.”

“This,” apologized the priest, “is, I’ll admit, just a little bit hard. We’ve some easier proofs that we’ll come to in a minute. So if you want to doze or skip . . .”

“Don’t cast aspersions on our intelligences,” Dick threatened.

“If we can’t follow the argument, who can?” triumphed Sue.

Abstract

“All right; it’s your own risk.

“The world is full of beautiful women and honest men. It has free institutions and noble people. We have a power inside us that enables us to do something most remarkable. We look at a beautiful woman; we see her lovely face, her finely chiseled nose, her lustrous eyes. We note about her all that the eye can see. And then this power within us does something most astonishing. From this beautiful woman it pulls something that is entirely different from those physical features—the idea beauty. That power enables us to take that idea and match it against things that are totally unlike a woman. Her beauty is like that of a rose, we say. This landscape has the beauty of a woman, the poet thinks. The beauty of a woman is like a melody.

“What have we done? From the concrete beautiful woman we have managed to take the abstract idea beauty. And that idea beauty is so universal in its application that it can be referred to a rose, a landscape, a melody, a gazelle, a swan, a graceful pine tree—yes and another woman.

Let’s take another example.

“We have dealings with an honest man. Our experiences with that man lead us to say, ‘Honesty is a magnificent thing.’ So we go around trying to match the idea honesty against governments, literature, weights and measures, the piece of goods we buy, a picture that depicts some landscape. We’ve abstracted the idea honesty from the honest man, and the power inside us has made the idea so universal that we swing it out and apply it to a thousand things that are really unrelated.”

Not Material

“I’d never really thought of that,” said Sheila Foster to her husband.

"Darling," he said, "why should you want to abstract ideas from individuals when you can spend your time abstracting money from your devoted husband?"

They were all alert, making a visible effort to follow the argument as Father Hall was outlining it. But thus far they could not see to what his argument was leading.

"Now," he said, "let's go to the next step. If anything is clear, it is the fact that beauty, honor, freedom, justice, rights and privileges are not material things."

"What does that mean?" demanded Mrs. Bradley.

"It means," her husband interposed, "that you can't buy 'em at a store and have 'em weighed and wrapped up and brought home."

Beyond the Senses

"Not bad," nodded the priest, approvingly. "It means that all these things never have been and never will be seen, tasted, smelled, heard, or touched; they are above and beyond the range of our senses.

"They are spiritual things, which is just another way of saying that they are not material. You can't make a chemical analysis of justice or send beauty to the laboratory to be reduced to so much carbon and sugar and starch. You can die for liberty, but you can't put it in a safe-deposit vault. Yet these things are tremendously important. In fact they are the most important things in life.

"A mirror can reflect only the material object that is placed in front of it. An eye can register only the color and line that are before it. An ear can register only those sounds that are within its range. I can feel the smoothness or roughness, the heat or cold of the object under my hand.

What Power Knows?

"What power is it in me that knows justice, beauty, honor, nobility? It's not any of my five senses, which terminate in my brain and register there. It must be something above my senses, something beyond the powers of my brain. It must be a power that can pull out of material things the spiritual ideas that we've been talking about. And a power

that can perform this operation that we know as abstraction has to be spiritual.

That power in us is our soul. And since that power rises above matter and pulls out of matter spiritual concepts that cannot be seen, touched, tasted, smelled, or heard, it must be spiritual too."

"What do you mean, spiritual?" demanded Dick.

"For the present let's put it as simply as possible: something that is beyond and above matter, a force that cannot be reduced to chemistry and physics, a principle that has powers wider than the powers of, let us say, a brain. A brain registers sounds, colors, smells, tastes, pleasurable and painful experiences. The spiritual soul pulls out of these experiences the wider, nonmaterial, universal ideas: beauty, grace charm, pleasure, painfulness, and so on, indefinitely."

Beyond Experience

"In other words," supplemented Mr. Bradley, "we know that we have a soul because we can think of things that our brain has not experienced. Because the brain is chemical and physical, it can handle only chemical and physical things. But these abstract ideas are not chemical or physical; they are above and beyond chemistry or physics. Therefore . . ."

"Q. E. D.," cried the twins, in one voice, and everyone laughed.

"The more you analyze this thing," continued the priest, "the more convincing it becomes. We are constantly thinking about things that do not come within range of our eyes or ears or hands or tongues. We base our lives on ideas and ideals that do not actually exist in the world of bodies in the form under which we think about them. The brain is a body and hence can deal only with bodies. But we are constantly thinking about and concerned with things that are not bodies. And so . . ."

"I think I have it," said Mr. Bradley. The rest nodded in understanding, so Father Hall continued.

Spiritual Words

"Let's go back to that editorial sentence once more. Into that sentence the writer wrote a most important word. He

wrote the word God. Certainly no one has ever seen God, except of course those who saw Christ, the Incarnate God. But by definition God is NOT material; God is spiritual. He is above and beyond matter. He has no body, and hence our senses cannot register Him on our brain—we cannot see, hear, taste, touch, or smell Him.

“Yet here we are talking about God and thinking about God. That is the same as saying that we have within us a power that enables us to think of the most spiritual of beings. Dogs don’t go down on their knees and worship God. Gorillas don’t erect altars to a spiritual being. Ants may have kings, and bees may have queens; but neither ants nor bees have gods that they adore.

“It is left for man, and for the highest types of intellectual man at that, to conceive of God, to think about Him and discuss Him—even when he denies Him—as a being without a body, above the reach of our senses, on a plane that can be thought of only by a nonmaterial principle. We could not think of the spirit God unless we had a spirit within us to do that thinking. Matter works on matter. Force works on force. And only spirit can work on (in the sense of thinking of) spirit.”

“Let’s Fight”

“That sounds clear enough and reasonable enough,” said Father *père*, and he found pleasant agreement among his guests.

“Now let’s take the last part of that important sentence,” Father Hall went on. “Here we hit a relatively easy proof for the existence of the soul. The sentence ends with the command, ‘Let’s fight for it!’

“That command is the clearest possible indication that the writer believes, even if he does not realize that he believes, that he and his readers have a soul.”

The group was clearly interested and waited for the explanation.

“When he wrote the sentence, the writer implicitly stated that there were several alternatives, of which two were most

obvious. When their freedom was imperiled, free men could determine to fight for it. Or they could grow slack and sit back while their freedom was taken away from them. In other words the author clearly indicated, when he begged them to fight, that he knew they were free to fight or not to fight. They might choose to struggle for their liberty, or they might with a shrug of the shoulders let that liberty be lost.

Free Wills

“That is just another way of saying that men have free wills.”

Kevin McDermott suddenly exploded.

“Of all the nutty theories in the world the theory that there is no free will is the nuttiest. We go through life constantly exercising free choice. I pick out one particular tie from among a dozen. I’m driving, and I decide to go down this road instead of that one. I go to a restaurant, and I make a choice between roast chicken and braised beef. I choose a school to which to go, a club, friends, even—though she had something to say about that—my wife. When I’m tempted to sin, I know doggone well that I don’t have to sin. And if I do sin, I don’t say to the priest, ‘Sorry; but of course I couldn’t help it’; I say, ‘Sorry; I did wrong; I could have done right, and I won’t do this sort of thing again’.”

Bradley, their host, grew interested.

What a World Without . . .

“Gosh! suppose men didn’t have free wills. Think of all the men who have had an impulse to kick their annoyers in the pants, or shoot a crying child, or rob a bank, or cheat at bridge. They’d simply follow those impulses and alibi, ‘Couldn’t help it. I’m not free’.”

Mrs. Bradley laughed gaily.

“What possibilities that opens up!” she cried. “Imagine using that as an excuse for telling people what you think of them . . . and never doing anything you don’t want to do . . . and not paying your bills . . . and driving your automobile through all the stop signs. . . .”

“Wow! what a world that would be!” Kevin McDermott looked positively worried.

“Don’t worry, dear,” his wife assured him. “You won’t get away with it. If ever you come home three sheets to the wind, or if ever you start to flirt with your stenographer, don’t tell me you have no free will. You may be able to tell that to some psychology prof, but you won’t get away with it where I’m concerned.”

Chaos

The possibilities opened up by the thought of a world without free will suddenly dawned on them . . . a world in which criminals would never be punished or even put in jail, because the poor fellows couldn’t help themselves . . . a world where a murderous kidnapper would be given a pat on the head and sent on his blithe way . . . a world in which men could justify their stealing by saying they had no liberty of choice . . . and roués could wreck the lives of their victims and grin and say, ‘Sorry; I just couldn’t help myself’ . . . and traitors to their country could no more be made to face the firing squad than could heroes who had risked all for their country . . . and wives would take their husbands’ infidelity for granted . . . and married women would be quite justified in running off with the handsome chauffeur . . . and nobody could blame or condemn a man who impulsively burned down an orphanage . . . and Bluebeard would not be a villain or even a particularly interesting case for the doctors . . . and vice and villainy and crime in all their forms could simply plead that since they were not free they had the same right to respect and honor as did virtue and goodness and unselfish love of fellow men.

Free Choice

“Anyhow,” summarized Mrs. Bradley, who thought very intensely on the subject, “I know I’m free. I know that I’m responsible for what I do. And all the arguments in the world wouldn’t convince me that I can’t be good if I want to be, or naughty if I want to be, and that I can’t pick out this dress in preference to that one, and can’t chose to do my duty as a mother or to walk out on my children because I’ve decided they bore and annoy me.”

“Oh, mother!” cried Sue. “Please don’t do that.”

“My darling,” replied her mother, “I know I’m stupid to give my life to ungrateful brats like you two. But just the same I keep on doing it. A chump, if you wish; but a free chump, a chump from choice.”

The maid entered and served fresh coffee and peppermints. It was a pleasant break. Depleted cups were replenished, and colored wafers were deposited within easy reach as Father Hall continued.

No Soul, No Freedom

“Unless we have a soul, free will is absolutely impossible, so impossible that when men refuse to admit the existence of a soul they are inevitably forced into the absolutely ridiculous position of refusing to admit free will.”

“That is the height of absurdity, against all our experience, against the practice of all men—who blame the villain and praise the hero—against our courts of law—which punish misdeeds—against common sense.” Mr. Bradley spoke with real conviction. “But why is the soul necessary?”

“Science,” Father Hall explained, “insists, if it insists on anything, on the laws of nature. In chemistry, physics, astronomy—once you’ve learned the laws, you know that everything follows with no more freedom than the freedom of an electric current running along a copper wire. Put certain chemicals together, and they have to unite, just as surely as rust has to form on wet iron. Put water into a container that is set in some odd position, and the water has to seek its own level. Our railroads operate on the principle that steam must do certain things if it is placed in cylinders.

Man Is Different

“Chemistry laws can be written into absolute formulas. Given the correct circumstances, principles of physics always work.

“But man? Well if man were made up just of chemicals, he’d always have to act the way those chemicals act. If he could be completely explained by physical laws, then under a given circumstance he would have to do this or that. In

fact his body does act in just this way. Put his body too close to the fire, and we have the chemical reaction known as burning. Put his body at too acute an angle, and it obeys the laws of gravity."

"A polite way," suggested Dick, "for saying that when a chap falls out of an airplane he isn't going to decide to fall up toward the moon."

"Quite right. His body is completely physical, and it obeys the rules of physics exactly.

Something Enters In

"But in every man there is something else besides the body, something that says to the body, 'Do this,' and the body obeys; 'Don't do this,' and the body refuses to move. So though the flames may be burning the body of the martyr to carbon ash, his free will holds back his cry of surrender and orders his body to remain in the fire when a slight gesture of renouncing the faith would mean freedom. All the chemistry of the saint's body may be clamoring for some sin of the flesh; his strong will refuses to yield, though that refusal means a struggle that almost tears the man apart—the struggle of the spirit against the flesh, we call it.

"My fingers may be itching to strike my enemy; I can hold back the blow, even though I'm bigger and stronger than he. Money or jewels may be a powerful lure for me; I can refuse to steal, even though I may know that I could get away with it.

"So you see in each of us there is something that is not bound by the physical and chemical laws that bind our body. I make choices that my body has to follow. It is not my body that is free; my body is governed entirely by laws of chemistry and physics; my body is something that can be analyzed in a laboratory and reduced to its elements in a retort. The source of my freedom is something above and superior to my body. That is precisely what we mean by a soul."

Powerful

Evan Foster nodded.

"That's a powerful argument," he agreed. "No soul, no freedom. But the one thing we're sure of is that we have

freedom. We do things because we want to. We don't do things because we don't want to. Hence we're free; therefore we have a soul."

The argument struck them as completely satisfactory. The world couldn't go on unless men were free. All society acts on the supposition that men are free. No soul, no freedom; freedom, soul.

Divine Discontent

"Now there is in human beings another factor that I have already referred to in passing," Father Hall went on. "Divine discontent."

"I thought that was just something that lecturers talked about at afternoon teas," said Mrs. Foster, mildly.

"Something that popular novelists use to explain why heroines go wrong," added her husband.

"No," said Father Hall, "it's something we all have. And if we didn't have a soul . . ."

"Well?"

". . . we wouldn't have divine discontent; that's all."

Unique Man

They waited for an explanation.

"Despite the fact that we say of nature that she is restless, nature is singularly restful. Certain elements like to combine with other elements. Once hydrogen has united with oxygen, the two elements become water and remain that way in restful content. Animals are singularly happy. The swallow built his nest in a certain way last year—in precisely the same way that swallows thousands of years ago built their nests in the ear of an Egyptian Sphinx—and the swallow next year will build his nest in the same way. The salmon find their way back to the same spawning grounds year after year. An old race horse turned loose in the Bluegrass doesn't pine for the snap of the starting barrier. He is utterly content with what he has.

"The whole history of man however is a story of his discontent. He has none of the peaceful power of combination

that chemicals have. He is eternally discontented with what he possesses. Make his body strong, and he may develop mental quirks. Give him bodily comforts, and he starts getting into scrapes. Give him riches, and he breaks into the scandal columns. He is earth's only dissatisfied animal.

He Improves

"Beyond that he has within himself the power to improve his own lot and the lot of others. A beaver's instinct leads the beaver to build his dam in a certain way. But a master beaver does not become discontented with the way that things are being done, does not go off and start making a streamlined dam with air conditioning. Monkeys live in the same sort of tree houses or caves that their remotest ancestors found satisfactory. No animal has ever invented a tool, built a new-type bridge, constructed a garage (much less a ship), changed radically his form of housing, acquired any skill in preparing food, developed the simplest form of art, or done anything that its original instinct did not confer upon it as an essential of its species.

"But man? Man is always making things different. He changes the style of his house. He dresses differently today from the way men dressed ten, a hundred, a thousand years ago. He is always increasing his power by inventing new tools. He is endlessly experimenting with new methods, new ideas, new inventions. Not so long ago, having the earth pretty well in hand, he started off through the air to show the eagles and the homing pigeons a few tricks about long-distance fast flying.

Entirely Different

"If all this doesn't indicate that there is in man something that makes him very different from even the wisest and most skillful and most powerful of animals, then I'm afraid that nothing would show the difference.

"But note: This ability to improve requires the most elaborate sort of abstract spiritual thinking. The thinker sits down and studies his problem—let's say the problem of throwing a bridge across the bay. No animals, except those that are by nature bridgebuilders, even think of attempting

the problem. Animals die of starvation when there is food on the other side of a narrow river.

“But the man who is faced with a problem like the building of a bridge does some marvelous things.

“He starts by making a statement of the problem in the most abstract mathematical terms—feet and inches and yards and pounds and logarithms and the terms of calculus. Please remember that nobody ever saw in nature a foot, an inch, a yard, or a pound—much less any of the mathematical equations with which the bridgebuilder works. Man pulled those terms right out of the bodies in which they exist only in a remote sense.

“Then the man deals with the problems of chemistry and physics, the structure of steel, the stress of wind and weight. Out of his brain he pulls facts about all these things, combines them into new arrangements, and produces at the end of all this work a unified, simple equation that balances steel against strain, wire against wind, the laws of physical science (laws that nobody has ever touched or handled) with the laws of mathematics that the genius of mankind has pulled out of the invisible world.

“Finally this man starts to work. He matches his solution against his problem, and in the end he walks across a bridge, a bridge which existed as an idea and ideal in his mind long before the first shovelful of earth was turned.

Means to an End

“Nobody has ever begun to understand the amount of abstract thinking required for a feat of this kind. All we know is that no animal ever even pretends to attempt it or to consider the possibility of attempting it. Yet Bushmen of the Congo make primitive bridges skillfully enough to excite the admiration of the civilized bridgebuilder.

“All this creative work we call adapting means to an end. That is a uniquely human act. Only human beings can see the end that they want to achieve, go after it decisively, experiment and observe and abstract until they have found the way to handle the problem, and then carry the solution through.

“The only animals who even remotely approach having this process have only an instinctive method that was clearly given them when their species came into existence. They can instinctively do things beautifully one way. Change that way, and they are as lost as a spider would be if it had to start spinning a cocoon instead of a web, or as a beaver would be if it had to start building anthills instead of dams. Man builds both web and cocoon, dam and anthill, and he learns, sometimes swiftly, sometimes slowly, to imitate everything that he sees in nature. Whenever he faces a problem, he calls on his ability to think, which ability cannot possibly be explained by anything but a principle that is higher than material nature and hence is master of material nature. And that principle is his soul.

Discontented

“Bodies are satisfied; not so souls. Though bodies are content just to be surrounded by other bodies, souls are constantly trying to change, to improve, to create, to dominate, to adjust, to build bigger, finer, more elaborate structures. Bodies are content with food and sleep and love. Souls quickly weary of all these things. Souls want things they’ve never seen and sounds they’ve never heard and beauty they’ve never discovered and conquest of nature that no man has ever made.

“If we were just bodies, we’d be as content as the cow in the meadow or the pig in the sty or the eagle volplaning across the sky or the bee gathering honey in a hidden hollow tree. But we are not just bodies. So we make the cow serve our purpose; we fatten the pig for our table; we learn from the eagle how to conquer the sky; and we rob the bee of his honey. In the midst of plenty we are not content; we are constantly, eternally seeking the things we haven’t, and we seek them by methods that no man has ever tried before.”

Simple Proof

Father Hall picked up his coffee cup. But the coffee was long since cold, and he set the cup aside without regret; coffee might keep him awake later on. He filled his pipe and pulled at it once more.

"Yes," mused Alma McDermott, aloud. "I rather think I have a soul. Not," she hastened to add, "that I ever really doubted it. But it's nice to be sure, to know that there are proofs, that common sense is on our side."

"Why should people want not to have a soul?" demanded Mrs. Bradley. "Truth to tell, I'd hate to think that I was exactly like an ape . . . even though a little more decorative."

"Very convincing, very convincing," Kevin McDermott conceded, nodding toward Father Hall. "But is there any *simple* proof for the existence of the soul . . . something one could flash on a friend who has doubts about the subject?"

Father Hall puffed out a balloon of smoke; gradually his smiling face reappeared through the haze. He pointed a finger at the inquirer.

Cross-question

"What's your name?"

McDermott blinked.

"Hey! what's the idea? Playing district attorney?"

"Never mind. Answer the question."

"Kevin McDermott, age forty-two, white, free (though married), American."

"Forty-two, eh? Remember by any chance a little kid named Kevin McDermott age six, who ran around barefooted during the summer, climbed trees, used a slingshot perilously, and was a general nuisance to the neighbors?"

"That"—Kevin nodded—"was me all over."

"And do you remember the thirteen-year-old Kevin McDermott that graduated from grammar school in his first pair of long pants and wanted to be a big-league baseball player?"

"Also present and accounted for."

Through the Years

"Let's see . . . the young bridegroom Kevin McDermott is about twenty-three, and he's as nervous as a freshly-landed trout."

"Perfect figure of speech for a newly-married man."

"Remember that young married Kevin McDermott who came to Lakeside when he was in his early thirties? He played a wicked game of tennis in those days before he grew sedate enough for golf. And he had just acquired the new job as secretary of his company."

"Heavens!" sighed Kevin. "Seems like yesterday."

"Suppose I told you that those four people I described, all of whom you think were yourself, were really not you at all but were four completely different, four other people."

"You'd forgive me if I laughed, I hope."

The Same Man

"And suppose that back in your early twenties you had committed a crime—robbed a bank, let's say, or kidnapped a millionaire's baby—and that just as you stepped out of the house this evening the law finally caught up with you."

"Hey! stay out of my sordid past."

"Would you go on the witness stand and say, 'Sorry, but though that criminal bore the same name as I do and looked like me, I'm an entirely different fellow from him'? Would you?"

"I might, but I wouldn't expect to get away with it."

"Then you, Kevin McDermott, are sure that you're the same chap that spent a summer at Lakeside for the first time ten years ago, that married Alma when you were in your early twenties, that graduated from grammar school, that played around in your bare feet?"

"Why certainly. I know I'm the same fellow. I think the same thoughts. I remember the experiences that I had. And if I had committed a crime, believe me, I'd know, even after the lapse of twenty years, that I was the guilty person."

Father Hall leaned back with a smile.

"Then you've proved conclusively that you have a soul."

McDermott looked puzzled.

"No can follow," he said.

Demands a Soul

"The argument is simply this: You know that you at six, at thirteen, at twenty, at thirty, at forty—yes at one hundred and ten, if you live that long—are the same person, Kevin McDermott. If anyone told you that you weren't, you'd hoot in his face."

"Rather!"

"Yet at thirteen nothing remained of your body as it was at six. Every seven years the food you eat has completely replaced in your body every least fragment of bone, every inch of tissue, every drop of blood. At twenty you have a different body from that which you had at thirteen; at thirty your body is again different from your body as it was at twenty; and so on, every seven years."

"But I'm still the same me."

"That's the point. You are, and you know you are. And if anyone tried to tell you that you weren't, you'd know he was crazy. But do you see why that proves that you have a soul?"

The Arguments

McDermott thought rapidly.

"If my body changes every seven years and nothing of my old body remains in my new one . . . and if I have nothing but a body . . . then every seven years I'm an entirely new person. Is that it?"

"Go on," ordered the priest.

"So since I have a new body every seven years and my old body is gone . . . and if I have nothing but a body . . ." He looked up in triumph. "Why I have to have something permanent, unchanging, something that remains when the body changes . . . otherwise . . ."

McDermott hesitated.

"You're on the right track. Push ahead," urged Father Hall.

"Otherwise I'd be a different person every seven years; and when I thought that Kevin McDermott today was the

same chap that he was at thirty, at twenty, at thirteen, at six, I'd be wrong. But doggone it, I know I'm the same person! And since my body isn't the same, the thing that makes me the same must be a permanent, unchanging soul."

The priest grinned triumph.

"Perfect! So an author can change his desk, put in new filing cabinets, throw away the old clippings and old notes, and as long as he is there in the center of these things, he is the same author. And the unchanging soul in the center of our constantly changing body keeps us the same person and gives us the assurance that we are the same person. Simple and conclusive."

What About the Brain?

Evan Foster struck a match and thoughtfully lit a cigaret. He had a question in his mind—as they all had, though thus far they had not brought it out.

"What about the brain in all this?"

Bradley père looked up in sharp interest.

"Yes. What about the brain?"

Then they all shot into the argument: If the brain is defective, thinking is defective. . . . If a man is hit on the head, he's knocked unconscious and stops thinking. . . . If he has a brain lesion, he goes crazy. . . . If one section of his brain stops functioning, he stops remembering and stops using the data in that section of his brain.

Then suddenly they all fell silent.

"So clearly the brain and thinking go together," Foster summarized. "And if it's the brain that thinks, I don't see why we need a soul."

Father Hall stretched out his legs comfortably.

Violin and Violinist

"Let's take another comparison. Fritz Kreisler the violinist comes to town. He goes to the concert hall, takes out his Stradivarius, and gives a magnificent concert. When it is

over, the audience applauds. Are they applauding Kreisler or the Stradivarius?"

"Why Kreisler of course," Sheila Foster loved to answer simple questions.

"Now let us suppose that when Kreisler is halfway through his concert, the E string of his violin breaks. He continues playing, improvising as best he can. Does he stop being a violinist because his violin lacks the E string?"

"Certainly not," said Evan Foster. "He's still a violinist even if . . ."

"... even if," Father Hall went on, as Foster hesitated, "he should come to the hall and have no violin. Let's say that the Stradivarius has been run over by a truck and been smashed. Kreisler comes to the concert hall, reaches down into the orchestra pit, and borrows an inexpensive violin from one of the men in the orchestra. What would happen?"

"I suppose the tone wouldn't be so good as the tone of the Stradivarius would have been," said Foster. "But Kreisler would still be a great musician."

Working Together

Father Hall smiled in approval.

"Excellent. And that isn't a bad parallel to explain the brain's function. Man is a creature composed of body and soul."

"That's not too original," jeered Dick, with mock impertinence.

"Be respectful, young man," cried Sue, severely.

"And because man is not an angel," continued the priest, "his creator intended that his body and soul work together. Man's soul is the higher factor, but his body is still an essential element in his make-up. Angels are different; they are pure spirits, having no bodies. But even when we are in heaven, waiting for the resurrection of our bodies, our souls will be incomplete and in a sense unfinished until they are reunited with our bodies.

“We think with our soul. Or, putting it more concisely, our soul is the thinking principle. But because we are composed of body and soul, while we are on earth the soul uses the brain as an instrument. The great Kreisler is a violinist even if he has no violin. He is a perfect violinist even when the E string on his violin is broken. With an inferior violin he plays inferior music. But that isn't the fault of the player; it's the fault of the instrument.

The Instrument

“So our soul is the thinking principle. It uses the brain as the instrument. If something cracks in the brain, the instrument is less perfect and thinking is impaired. If the instrument is smashed, the thinking for the time stops, but the thinker does not cease to be. When finally the soul is separated from the body, God supplies for the brain—if after death there is (and there probably isn't) any need for an instrument; the thinking principle, still complete, resumes thinking and willing according to God's plans until the day when body and soul, brain and mind, are again united. Then the thinking musician again has his brain-violin, and he becomes again the complete man, a creature composed of body and soul.

“That's a crude figure of speech. But it may serve to make clear the fact that the brain is the instrument that the thinking soul uses. Without the brain the thinking soul may be as lost as an author would be if his files were destroyed or his desk completely disarranged. But the soul would still be the thinking principle, as the author would still be the writer, and the violinist the great musician.”

Quiz

Father Hall looked at the group speculatively.

“May we have a little examination?” he asked, almost with hesitation.

“Why not?” returned Dick. “After the things dad's said about my grades, I'd like to see him flunk a psychology quiz.”

“Let me listen,” pleaded Sheila Foster. “The rest of you are so much brighter than I.”

"Shoot," said Mr. Bradley, and the others nodded with more or less enthusiasm—chiefly, Father Hall noted, less.

"Well," he began, "how do you know that you have something besides a body?"

"That's easy," replied Sue, grabbing what she felt would be the simplest question. "Because I know I'm me, and I'm conscious that the person who is me is the same person who used to be me. But my body changes every seven years. So in order for the present me to be the same as the me that I used to be, I must possess something permanent. That's my soul."

All Agree

"She *would* take a snap question," scoffed her brother. "I'll bet I land a lulu and get stuck for a flunk or a condition."

Father Hall surveyed the group.

"Any other answers?"

"All men of all races," began Mrs. Bradley, tentatively, "have been sure that besides their body they had something else, something we call the soul."

Father Hall shook his head.

"Men have a way of being frequently wrong."

Kevin McDermott put in his oar.

"But before you can say that they were right or wrong, you have to find out why they hold what they hold. In this case they investigated and observed. They found that there was in them a principle that made them different from the rock, the tree, the sheep."

"What do you mean by a principle?" demanded the priest, sternly.

"Why it's the source from which something flows. It's the power that we see working in some sort of manifestation."

What Man Does

Father Hall beamed.

"What a bright class!" he murmured.

“... said the teacher, with a bow to himself,” said Sue, in a loud aside.

“Well what precisely does a man do that marks him off from the rock, the tree, and the sheep?”

“My turn,” cried Alma McDermott, seizing an easy one. “He thinks; he wills; he is a creator; he has a bad attack of divine discontent.”

Her husband regarded her with admiration.

“To think that I married a genius and all these years never even suspected it!”

“Darling,” replied his wife, brightly, “it’s still not too late to appreciate what you got when you got me.”

Spiritual

Father Hall surveyed the group sternly.

“I don’t see any difference between the thinking that a man does and the thinking that’s done by, let’s say, an intelligent dog—one of these seeing-eye dogs—or an educated ape.”

“Oh you don’t, don’t you?” retorted Mr. Bradley. “Well a man has the ability to think spiritual thoughts.”

“Spiritual thoughts?” mocked his inquisitor. “Never heard of ’em.” He fixed Bradley with a cold eye. “What’s a spiritual thought?”

“A spiritual thought, as far as I understand it—” Bradley began.

“Oh dear!” interrupted his wife, with a wail, “here’s where we get a little psychological heresy.”

“—is a thought,” persisted Bradley, “that cannot be perceived through the senses. It’s a thought about something that you cannot touch or see or hear or taste or smell.”

“Example, please,” commanded Father Hall.

“Justice, loyalty, beauty . . .”

"You would drag in beauty," said his wife.

"Living with you, my dear, how could I fail to? And then there's the great spiritual idea of God."

New Light

Evan Foster got a sudden light.

"Just a minute. If we didn't have souls, how in thunder could we possibly be discussing them? A soul is spiritual. When we start arguing about the spiritual thing called a soul, it means that we have to have a spiritual power in order to think about it at all, don't we?"

"Excellent!" Father Hall beamed. It was such an intelligent comment, and he loved a thinker who pushed ahead of what the teacher had taught.

Alma McDermott took the floor.

"You all missed an argument that I liked—about the author's writing the book."

Father Hall turned toward her. She was very eager and looked particularly charming as she sat forward, the light of the fire on her keen face.

The Unifying Principle

"Let's hear it," he said.

"Well in order to write a single book, an author gathers all sorts of odds and ends out of his experience, memory, library, notebooks—various sources. And because he's one person, he can put these odds and ends together to make a unified book."

She paused. They nodded approval and encouragement.

"Well," she went on, "it seems that our brain is a kind of filing case. And if there weren't something to pull out of the various nooks and crannies of our minds . . ."

"Don't you like that nooks-and-crannies idea?" purred her husband. "I'm surprised she didn't do a Doc Dwarf and have crooks and nannies."

"Please," said she, severely, "don't interrupt my flow of thought." He wilted elaborately. "As I was saying, something in us has the power to pull things out of our brain, get them together, and present them in logical sentences and complete unified statements. There!"—she glowed at the rest—"if I'm not a star pupil!"

"Line forms at the left for medals," announced her husband.

"I'll let you wear mine sometime," she said, benignly.

Free Will

They were all silent for a moment.

"No more?" asked Father Hall.

"Oh yes," cried Sue. "There's free will."

They gave her the floor.

"Chemical and physical substances haven't free will. They have to obey the natural law. Our bodies are composed of chemical and physical substances; they should obey the laws. But we know that there is something in us that is free."

"I'll tell the world!" agreed her twin. "Just try to make me do what I don't want to do!"

"So since our bodies aren't free, we must have something else, something superior to our bodies. That something is what we call the soul."

Bradley père took up the theme.

"The thing that hits me hardest is the clear difference between men and animals, all that stuff about man the creator, man the discontented. That knocks me flat. And I'm darned if I can see how anyone can get around that. When monkeys start building automobiles or even making themselves a good pair of roller skates, I'll start believing that I'm not essentially different from the monkey."

Father Hall spread his hands in a gesture of conclusion.

“Well simply and without any of the more difficult arguments, that’s that.”

What’s Simple?

But Mrs. Bradley was not quite satisfied.

“Somewhere I’ve heard,” she said, “that a human soul is simple.” She looked her puzzlement. “Exactly what does that mean?”

Father Hall seemed a little nonplussed.

“I wonder whether I can make that clear in a few words,” he said, half to himself. “Suppose we all work together on this. Hold out your right arm, each of you.” They obeyed, each one thrusting his right arm well out into space. “Note that the characteristic thing about matter, about anything material, is that it has parts outside of parts.”

“Meaning which?” demanded McDermott.

“Well look at your forefinger. That is material. So it has a first joint and a second joint and a third joint. Now bend your forefinger toward you; it touches your palm.” He looked up to see them all actually doing it. “And if you bend your elbow, you have your forearm moving toward your upper arm and your closed fist touching your shoulder . . . parts outside of parts. That is what we mean by matter. It’s true of all matter—the smallest molecule, its atoms one outside the other; the biggest solar system, the suns and the planets all outside one another.”

Matter Vs. Spirit

He thought quickly.

“Now a spiritual thing is something that has no parts. It has no parts outside of parts.”

“I can’t get a picture of that,” protested Sheila.

“Don’t try,” said the priest. “You know what we mean even though you can’t get a picture of it. You know with your spiritual soul; you can’t get a picture because you get pictures in your brain, and your brain can’t present a picture of a thing that is essentially spiritual.”

"Ouch!" said Evan. "Think, darling; don't go in for movies." Father Hall resumed.

"We say that the soul has no parts. It is simple, without any parts outside of parts. There are many proofs for that. But there is one proof that is rather easy and, I think, satisfactory. Everyone kindly look at his forefinger again."

They all concentrated.

No Parts

"Now," said the priest, "touch your right forefinger with your right forefinger." He looked around the group. "No cheating there. I mean touch the tip of that forefinger with the tip of that same forefinger."

"You're kidding us," cried Bradley *père*. "I can touch my right forefinger with my left forefinger. I can touch the third joint with the first joint. But of course I can't touch the first joint with that same first joint."

"That," said the priest, "is because your forefinger is matter, because it has parts outside of parts."

They looked at their forefingers as if they were seeing them for the first time.

"All of us have the most peculiar experience when we think. If we should stop to think about our thinking, we would realize that a marvelous thing was happening: We have touched ourselves in the process of thinking. While a forefinger can't touch the same forefinger, a thought can touch the thought."

"Hey!" cried Mr. Bradley. "Again, and slower. That's pretty thick."

Consciousness

"We've all been sitting here tonight," explained the priest, "doing some quite elaborate thinking. As we thought, every once in a while it occurred to us, 'Isn't this astonishing? I'm thinking all these unusual thoughts.' That's what we call consciousness. Consciousness means that not only

are we thinking but we know that we are thinking; we turn back on ourselves and say, 'I am thinking, and these thoughts are mine.' That's a most marvelous performance, marvelous because we do it all the time without realizing that we are doing it, without pausing to think about how we do it. I think; my thoughts touch themselves thinking; I am conscious that I think. I have a double action as I think; I know my thoughts, and with those same thoughts I know myself thinking."

"Whew!" whistled Dick.

"In other words my forefinger can't touch my forefinger because it has parts outside of parts. But my soul can think and touch itself thinking. My thoughts know that they are thoughts and that I am thinking. And only with a simple thing, a thing without parts, can that be possible."

They looked a little bewildered.

Late Hour

"Think it over," he said. "The more you think about it, the clearer it becomes. Remember that you can't touch your forefinger with the same forefinger. But remember that while your soul is thinking it touches itself thinking. That is consciousness, and consciousness is possible only in something that has no parts."

He glanced at his wrist watch.

"Why it's almost midnight," he cried. "I'm terribly sorry. I'll have to race away. This is no hour for an ancient clergyman to be alone in a big city."

Mr. Bradley lifted a detaining hand.

"How do you prove that our souls are immortal?"

Father Hall shook his head.

"You're not going to get me into that tonight," he said. "That's too big a question. We'll talk about that some other night. It'll be enough for this evening if you realize that you

have a soul and that Christ told you that that soul was going to live as long as God lives and that you'd better save it—or else.

Reasonable Faith

“But do,” he pleaded, “remember that the Catholic faith is as reasonable in this question of the soul as she is in all else. She has accepted and has made her own all the reasonable proofs for the existence of the soul. Belief in the existence of the soul rests on common sense, on experience, on sound philosophy, on our consciousness and observation, on proofs that have never been thrown down under even the most vicious attacks. In admitting the existence of the soul, we take our place among all the greatest thinkers of all the greatest ages of history.

“We go even further. Having proved the existence of our soul, we come to Christ to learn the incredible value of souls. We see God purchasing men's souls with His death. We see souls drawing God from heaven to dwell with them. We see souls dignified to the position of God's bright saints in the kingdom of His glory. We see souls receiving a share of the divine life through the sacraments and nurtured with the body and soul of the Incarnate God through the Eucharist.

“Philosophically and scientifically speaking, belief in the existence of souls is a profoundly reasonable belief, proved to the hilt. But beyond that, in the teaching of Jesus Christ souls become the dearest concern of the Blessed Trinity: They are cradled in the infinite love of the eternal Father, redeemed by the blood of the divine Son, lifted to divine possibilities by the spirit of God.

“It is a glorious thing to prove that we have souls. It is a far more glorious thing to realize that those souls are our guarantee of eternal happiness in the living presence of divine beauty and truth.”

They all said their good nights, happy in the warm consciousness that they were not animals, not just earthborn and earthbound creatures destined for an ugly grave, but the precious sons and daughters whose souls, ennobled by sanctifying grace, made them very like their creator and Father.

THE QUEEN'S WORK
3115 South Grand Boulevard
St. Louis 18, Mo.