

Is Man Immortal?
Contribution to a Symposium
(January 13, 1906)

Your communication was received during my absence from the city. The question you ask is a large and serious one, and it is doubtful if in the hurry of the moment I can make myself intelligible to yourself and readers. I am so busy with the affairs of this life, so much concerned with the wrongs that exist here, with the suffering that prevails now, and so profoundly impressed with the sense of duty I owe myself and my fellow man, here and now, that I have but little time to think of what lies beyond the grave; and but for the earnestness and anxiety so apparent in your letter, I should feel obliged to decline the attempt to answer such a question which at best must still remain unanswered.

The most scientific minds have thus far failed to demonstrate the immortality of human life, and yet the normal being, the wide world over, be he learned or ignorant, wise or foolish, good or evil, longs for, yearns for, hungers and hopes for, if he does not actually believe in, life everlasting; and this seems to be to present the strongest proof that immortality is a fact in nature.

There are many truths that are not demonstrable to the ordinary senses and yet they are so obvious and self-evident that it would be folly to attempt to deny or contradict them.

Coming more directly to your question, as to whether I, my personal, identical, conscious self, shall continue to live after my body goes back to dust, I confess I do not know, nor do I know of any means of knowing, but as I, in that narrow capacity, am infinitesimally insignificant, it is a question which does not greatly concern me.

I believe firmly, however, in the immortal life of humanity as a whole, and as my little life merges in and becomes an elementary part of that infinitely larger life, I may, and in fact do, feel secure in the faith and belief in immortality.

Men are small, but MAN is tall as God himself.

The universal life is eternal and will bloom with perennial glory after all the planets wheel dead in space.

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