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## WHAT IS THE HUMAN SOUL?



*Botticelli's Madonna with Infant Jesus and St. John Showing the Halos Which May Have Originated in Scientific Fact*

### The Efforts of Science to Seize Upon the Visible Spark of Life Through Use of Many Agencies

**W**HAT is the human soul? It is the mystery of the ages, the despair of psychology, the hope of religion—but ever unknown, unsolved, even unproved to exist at all, if the long succession of doubting Thomases be admitted to the endless controversy.

Is it life? Is it that very essence of life which distinguishes sentient beings from the masses of inert matter? Is it the essence of that life which man alone rejoices in, while the animals perish for eternity? Is it the life higher than the brute's which a man's dog can acquire in sufficient part to accompany him to heaven? Is it, perhaps, some faintest, most intimate spark of life which flits from the body of man and beast alike when death at last takes the ultimate citadel of their being and inevitable corruption hastens its inexorable ruin?

Today science, which has dared all mysteries, even this, in the name of the truth which should prevail, sweeps its instruments of precision upon the human soul in a new, sincere endeavor to make life's spark visible, to seize with the gross senses of the body the elusive, imperponderable reality of the soul.

On this one score, at least, science, so often positive and aggressive, fears to speak firmly. Some of its professors, with the daring of pioneer discoverers, have indeed announced their seizure of the light of that vanishing spark; but science at large, so supreme would be the importance of their fact, admits as yet nothing more than the faint possibility.

There have been too many claims, too many theories, too many faiths as to the existence of the soul. It is as though, out of a cloud of guesses, a single flash had come, leaving the startled eye dazzled, wondering, doubtful whether from that murk of the ages any real life can ever appear.

IT IS no new thing, this endeavor to approach the soul through the forces of life and matter.

The rapt spirit of the East Indian seer, gazing into his priceless crystal ball in his persistent effort to detach his soul from all earthly objects, has stood for the visions of the occult, and the hard-headed, matter-of-fact western peoples have provided coteries of believers in the possibility of projecting some astral body leagues away from the brown, unconscious form, even as they have assented to the truth of the visions that have come to the still, receptive soul who contemplates the whiteness of the crystal sphere.

Christian faith and art have perpetuated the belief that, in some more favored, more blessed beings, the luminous, radiant spirit is able to burst the bonds of the opaque flesh and give

forth a halo or a nimbus that shall apprise beholders of the glory that abides within.

A Botticelli, in depicting the infant Savior in his mother's lap, with good St. John beside her, is presenting only the conventional halo into which Christian faith has transformed its idea of the radiance which emanates from the sanctity of such blessed souls.

The newest experiments of science have been said to make visible at least the spark of human life, if not the soul itself. Dr. Patrick S. O'Donnell, expert in X-rays, followed up in his Chicago laboratory the methods by which Dr. W. J. Kilner, of London, had achieved his demonstrations of the existence of a spark of life that passes at the instant of death. In the presence of other physicians at Mercy Hospital, when a man patient was passing away, he employed the Kilner method of demonstration, and it was declared

that, around the body of the patient, at the moment of death, an aura of faint light appeared and presently faded.

He called together thirty-five physicians, and under conditions of light—or, better, of darkness—they were enabled to see the auras emanating from the forms of four girls, models from the Chicago Art Institute, who had consented to the experiment. It was no question of death with them. They were demonstrating merely the existence of what, for lack of more definite knowledge, was called the "human atmosphere." In a dark cabinet at Mercy Hospital the drapery that enveloped the models was removed, and through a screen of chemicals specially qualified to bring out the visibility of the light their bodies emitted, it was discerned.

*"Thought Photographs" by Dr. Baraduc, the Parisian Nerve Specialist (Scientists Have Taken These Cum Grano Salis)*



*Sad and Violent Mental Evolutions*



*A Nightmare*



*Catastrophe of Curative Force at Lourdes*



*Beautiful Form of a Benediction*



Arthur W. Goodspeed, director of the department of physics at the University of Pennsylvania, that remorseless physicist who so drastically exhausted the pretensions of Keeley's motor, to make a serious investigation. It is possible, just possible, Professor Goodspeed admits, that something real has been demonstrated.

"I do not think there is anything in it," preferred Doctor Goodspeed. "But science treasures, as its greatest possession, the endowment of the open mind. The experiments will be conducted along the lines suggested by Doctor Kilner, of London. The special apparatus necessary will be made. The president of the Roentgen Manufacturing Company, H. Clyde Snook, associates himself in the investigation. We will parallel the London experiments and give them whatever time is requisite for a complete inquiry. But, however distinguished and able the men who announce discoveries so exceptional as these, we can accord them nothing more than the willingness to examine their evidence. So great a scientist as Blondlot, of Paris, believed he had discovered a wholly new set of rays—the famous N-rays, or Blondlot rays. Yet, sincere as he undoubtedly was, his ability and honesty had not safeguarded him from simply making a mistake.

For my own part, speaking solely from the small knowledge which we actually possess regarding our life forces, I think the amount of energy involved in any such change as the death of a human being is too infinitesimal to be detected by any of our means of observation. The spark of human vitality is too slight an energy when it is fading away in death. There may be possibly some difference in its intensity when the individual is in full health. But I am skeptical of it all. Yet, in the interest of science, it is not well to be too skeptical."

"Should not the long tradition of the existence of the nimbus or aureole have weight as

evidence in favor of the visible aura, whether it is or is not the actual soul?"

"That tradition has not influenced my decision to investigate the phenomena as reported. It is, however, not at all impossible that there may be some influence, such as an aura of nimbus, surrounding the human body. Bigger men than I have contended that there is some truth in it."

So the persistent faiths, the repeated endeavors, the numberless conjectures as to the nature of the soul have come to this: That unprejudiced science is willing to admit the possibility of discerning some manifestations of the unknown agency, of the dynamic force by which man lives here and, if the hopes of the multitudes are based upon some eternal verity, is destined to live hereafter.

There have been strange demonstrations in (CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE)