

I do not agree with Mr. Wakeman in his statement that "Sight is seeing, is action, and not a thing, and has no eyes as instruments; it is simply the activity of the nervous tissues of the eyes and brain when light vibrations reach them" (p. 109). I must insist that the activity of the eyes has absolutely nothing to do with the sensation of consciousness; *that* is associated only with the activity of the sight-center in the brain, and the eyes merely transmit to that center certain vibrations, arousing in it a nervous activity with which the sense of sight is associated, but the eyes have nothing to do with the state of consciousness. They are merely transmitters or instruments, as I before insisted upon; and that the consciousness, the idea of seeing, is associated only with activity of the sight-center in the brain is proved by the fact that in hallucinations, when this sight-center is morbidly excited, the sensation of sight is experienced *without* vibrations reaching the sight-center through the eye, or without the rest of the brain being involved in the slightest degree. No matter *how* the sight-center is aroused into activity, it is the activity with which thought is associated, and with the activity of that center only. I must insist, therefore, that eyes *are* 'instruments,' and not in any way associated with, or producers of, the conscious state known to us as the sensation of sight. I do not see, finally, how Mr. Wakeman can pronounce upon the "impossibility" of consciousness persisting apart from brain functions, unless he is omnipotent,—since all his arguments can ever lead to is the scientific *improbability* of such persistence, and this improbability will, in turn, rest—not on philosophic speculation, but on the presence or absence of *facts* tending to show that such persistence of consciousness, apart from brain function, is a fact in nature.

Mr. Wakeman says there is no such evidence, we psychical researchers say there is,—not that the evidence is absolutely conclusive, but that it is suggestive, and at least renders such persistence of personality a probability; and this brings me to my last point, to which I have been working throughout this paper. I do not think the question of survival or non-survival can ever be settled by philosophic or metaphysical speculation. Mr. Wakeman might produce arguments against its probability, and I for it, indefinitely, and we would probably both, in the end, be all the more solidly grounded in our own belief.

I think that the only way this matter can ever be settled is by resolutely putting aside all philosophic and other preconceptions, and by turning to direct investigation of evidence and of facts that may be forthcoming—tending to say that such persistence of consciousness is an actual fact. If these facts are ever established, then all speculation is mere child's play and conclusively disproved by the evidence in the case.

As a member of the Psychical Research Society I must insist upon this being the only attitude in which to approach this problem, and only by such direct evidence can this fact ever be definitely settled one way or the other.

HEREWARD CARRINGTON.

THE LAY CHURCH.

We have received a number of communications, suggestions and endorsements on the proposition of founding a Lay Church, published some time ago in *The Open Court*, and mentioned again in our March issue. It almost seems

as if the time were ripe for forming religious societies of such a nature. Among the communications received we select one for publication on account of the experiences and other details characteristic of the difficulties attending such an institution.

Mr. Albert J. Edmunds, of Philadelphia, writes as follows:

"Your Lay Church prospectus is very interesting to me, as I was a charter member (one of twelve) of exactly such a church, founded at Sunderland, in the North of England, in 1880. It was known as The Free Associate Church. Two other members of the first organization were Thomas Dixon, the well-known workman-friend of Ruskin, and William Brockie, a local self-made scholar.

"We had never heard of the New York Ethical Culture Society, founded two or three years before us, and imagined that

'We were the first
That ever burst
Into that silent sea.'

"Our platform was precisely that sketched by you. We had a president, it is true, in the venerable William Brockie, who stood as a mediator between the Theist and the Atheist. But we had no minister, no salaried officials. We took it in turns to speak, and the utmost freedom was allowed. Outsiders were also invited, and I have heard an orthodox Methodist sermon one Sunday and the baldest atheism the next. Frederic Harrison the Comtist once addressed the church, as well as other leaders.

"At first we were full of a strange new enthusiasm. An old Chartist, who was an atheist of a violent type, now supposed to be extinct, said that, though he had objected to such a word as 'holy,' yet he could truthfully apply it to this enthusiasm. We scorned to take up a collection, believing, with the Quakers, that love of the cause did not need it.

"But soon the devil appeared. It became apparent that, while we were very tolerant, and all of us (with the exception of a young woman organist whose chief business with us was to find a husband) pronounced freethinkers, yet we quickly divided into the inevitable camps of spiritualists and materialists. The worthy president, as already hinted, was a buffer between the two. We used to be astonished at his attitude. At one time he would seem to assent to the crude statements of the materialist; at another, he would sympathize with the Theists and even with Christians. Had the radical wing been of the mild type now known as agnostics, all might have been well; but while we had some such, a palefaced scholarly clerk who posed as an agnostic was really a materialist, and others were avowedly so. Besides the old Chartist referred to, there were others who were violent atheists, and reveled in shocking the theistic party. One of them I shall never forget. He was black enough to represent the dread ruler of Gehenna. At the end of a Sunday night harangue (for we never met in the morning, so as not to antagonize the churches) he wound up with the ancient oracle in Genesis as the doom of man:

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return!"

"And he uttered it with a sort of ferocious gusto of flashing eye and gnashing teeth as if significant to the Christian of the speaker's future abode.

"With the jarring of factions came flagging support. Soon the collection box was brought round, and our first flush of pride was humbled. At last

the society died for lack of funds. It lasted six years (1880-1886). The president died in 1890, at the age of seventy-eight; the pale agnostic took his own life through conjugal unhappiness;* and doubtless a large proportion of the congregation are now no more.

"My joining this church gave great offence to the local Society of Friends, and I resigned my birthright membership. But at the end of one year I also resigned from the church, though attending their meetings and even addressing them after my withdrawal. I have never had a spiritual home in the quarter of a century that has since elapsed. The year's experience convinced me that some belief in the spiritual or supernatural was a *sine qua non* for a church. I regarded the society as a good debating club, but vigorously denied that it could ever be a church.

This conviction I still hold, but see as yet no solution. The Hicksite Friends (whose meeting in Germantown I have been attending for the past year) are the nearest approach to my ideal. But they hold on to certain expiring remnants of seventeenth-century thought that make them fall short of my wish. I crave for the silence of worship, and resent much of the speaking, especially of women. (This is not true, however, of my own meeting, where Joseph Wharton, the well-known iron-master, is the chief speaker—a man of strong sense, hale old age and advanced ideas.) My own conviction is that worship and speaking should not be mixed. The only vehicles of worship are silence and music, music and silence. (Music of course the Quakers taboo.) There ought to be some plan whereby those wanting to hear discourses and those wanting to meditate or pray should be either in separate rooms at the same time or else in the same room at different times. This problem has agitated me for years. Neither the Hicksite Friends, the Unitarians, nor the Ethical Culture societies have solved it."

HINDUISM DIFFERENT FROM BUDDHISM.

We have repeatedly received letters to the effect that it would be desirable to call attention to the fact that Buddhism, Brahmanism and Theosophy are three different things and should not be confused.

Brahmanism is the religion of ancient India, and is commonly called Hinduism when referred to in its modern form. The sacred book of the Brahmans is the Vedas, and it has found its highest philosophical explanation in the Vedanta. The main doctrine of Brahmanism is the theory of self or *atman*, which may briefly be characterized as the thing-in-itself in the domain of psychology. The Upanishads presented this philosophy in the form of dialogues or discourses which are most attractively written and contain many deep thoughts, but they are permeated with the spirit of a metaphysical psychology which sees in the atman, the soul which controls all physical and mental activity. This atman is finally identified with the atman of the entire world, and so the Vedanta philosophy has been worked out into psychical pantheism.

Buddhism is the very opposite to the Vedanta conception of Brahmanism. Buddha denied the existence of the atman, and the doctrine of the *an-atman* is one of the corner stones of his religion. In fact Buddha based his ethics

* He once said on the platform (combating the orthodox idea that religion was necessary to happiness): "A certain amount of happiness is a necessity to existence."