

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

How can we tell what we have been in our last incarnation?
asked a visitor the other night after a lecture.

The only way to tell is to know positively as who we lived before. The faculty by which this knowledge comes is memory, of a higher order. In the absence of that, each may form estimates of what he was before by what he really likes now. It is only reasonable to suppose that, if we have any choice in the matter, we would not select as the condition or environments into which we were to come, such as were unsuited to our tastes or development and, on the other hand, if we have no choice, then, the law which governs reincarnation would not put us into conditions unsuited for development.

We feel in sympathy with or are opposed to certain ideals, characters, classes of people, types of people, crafts, professions, arts and occupations, and this would indicate whether we had worked for or against these before. If we feel at home or ill-at-ease in good or bad society, that would indicate to what we had been accustomed before. A tramp, accustomed to sunning himself idly on an old wharf or along a dusty country road, would not feel comfortable in polite society, a chemist's laboratory, or on the rostrum. Nor would one who had been an active industrious man, mechanically or philosophically inclined, feel comfortable and at ease sunning himself, unwashed, in ragged clothes.

We may with fair accuracy infer what we were in the past life not by wealth or position in the present, but to what our impulses, ambitions, likes, dislikes, controlling passions, draw us in the present.

Can we tell how many times we were born before?

The body is born and the body dies. The soul is neither born nor dies, but incarnates into the body which is born and leaves the body at the body's death.

To know how many lives a soul has spent in this world, take a glance at the different races now in the world. Consider the moral, mental and spiritual development of an African, or South Sea

Islander; and then that of a Newton, Shakespeare, Plato, Buddha, or Christ. Between these extremes think of the different grades of development which humanity presents. After this ask where do "I" stand between these extremes.

After averaging the position see how much "I" have learned from the experiences of the present life—the ordinary man learns but little—and how do "I" act what "I" have learned. After this interesting question, we may perhaps form some idea of the number of times it must have been necessary to have lived in order to have reached even the present state.

There is no way for any one person to tell how many times he has lived before except by actual knowledge and a continued consciousness from the past. If he were told he lived twice or fifty thousand times the information would not benefit him, and he would not be able to verify it except by knowledge which comes from his own soul. But by the illustration given we may perhaps form some idea of the millions of years through which we must have come to have reached the present state.

Are we conscious between our reincarnations?

We are. We are not conscious in the same manner as we are during life in the body. This world is the field of action. In it man lives and moves and thinks. Man is a composite being made up or composed of seven men or principles. At death the divine portion of man separates itself from the grossly material portion, and the divine principles or men then dwell in a state or condition which has been determined by the thoughts and actions through the entire life. These divine principles are the mind, soul, and spirit, which, with the higher desires, pass into the ideal condition which the life on earth has determined. This condition can be no higher than were the thoughts or ideals during life. As these principles are disconnected from the grossly material portion they are not conscious of the evil of the life. But they are conscious, and live out the ideals which have been formed during the life just ended. This is a period of rest, which is as necessary to the soul's progress as a rest at night is necessary to fit the body and mind for the activities of the coming day.

At death, the separation of the divine from the mortal principles allows the bliss of the living out of ideals to be experienced. This is a conscious state between reincarnations.

What are the theosophical views of Adam's and Eve's reincarnations?

Whenever this question has been asked of a theosophist it has caused a smile, for even though the idea of Adam and Eve being the first two human beings who lived in this world has been shown in its absurdities by modern scientific investigations, yet the question quite frequently comes up.

The well informed man will at once say that evolution shows this tale to be a fable. The theosophist agrees with this, but saying that the early history of the human race has been preserved in this myth or fable. The Secret Doctrine shows that the human family in its early and primeval state were not as they are now, made up of men and women, but that in fact there was no sex. That gradually in the natural development a dual sex or hermaphroditism, was developed in each human being. That still later were developed the sexes, into which humanity at present is divided.

Adam and Eve does not mean one man and one woman, but the whole humanity. You and I have been Adam and Eve. The reincarnations of Adam and Eve is the reincarnation of the human soul in many different bodies, in many lands, and through many races.

What is the length of the time appointed between reincarnations, if there is any specified time?

It has been said that the period between incarnations, or from the time of the death of one body until the soul takes up its abode in another which is born into the world, is about fifteen hundred years. But this by no means applies to all people, and especially not to the active-minded modern western man.

The good man who longs for heaven, who performs good works in this world and has ideals and a vivid imagination, one who longs for an eternity in heaven, may have a heaven for an immense period, but it is safe to say that such is not the average man in the present day.

Life in this world is the field of action in which seeds are sown. Heaven is a state or condition of rest where the mind rests from its labors and works in life that it may be again reincarnated. The period after which the mind is drawn back depends on what it has done in life and where it has placed its thought, for wherever the thought or the aspiration is to that place or condition the mind will go. The period is not to be measured by our years, but rather by the mind's capacity for enjoyment in activity or rest. A moment at one time seems to be an eternity. Another moment passes like a flash. Our measurement of time, therefore, is not in the days and years which come and go, but in the capacity for making these days or years long or short.

The time is appointed for our stay in heaven between reincarnations. Each one appoints it himself. Each human being lives his own life. Inasmuch as each differs in detail from every other no definite statement as to time can be made other than that each makes his time himself by his own thoughts and actions, and it is long or short as he makes it. It is possible for one to reincarnate in less than a year, though this is unusual, or to extend the period for thousands of years.

Do we change our personality when we return to earth?

We do in the same manner that we change a suit of clothes when it has served its purpose and no longer is necessary. The personality is made up of elemental matter combined into form, animated by the principle of life, directed and promoted by desire, with the lower phases of the mind acting therein through the five senses. This is the combination which we call the personality. It only exists for the term of years from birth to death; serving as the instrument with and through which the mind works, comes into contact with the world, and experiences life therein. At death, this personality is laid aside and returns into the occult elements of earth, water, air, and fire, from which it was drawn and combined. The human mind then passes on to its state of rest after the enjoyment of which it builds up and enters another personality to continue its education and experiences in the world.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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