

Discipleship and Initiation: The Three Stages and Seven Steps to Hierarchy and Beyond

Temple Richmond

Summary

The nature of the spiritual path has been discussed in the books of Alice Bailey by the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul in terms of discipleship and initiation. It is therefore imperative that these terms be well understood. To this end, this essay surveys definitions of the terms “disciple” and “initiate” offered by the Tibetan. Each is explained in practical terms which may be applied by the seeker. Next, the three stages of discipleship are enumerated and explained, these being the Paths of Probation, Discipleship, and Initiation. Finally, the seven initiations available on planet Earth are described in detail, including the names for each, the nature of ray energies encountered, the resultant psychospiritual issues, the centers concerned, the marks of recognition, and the numbers of persons thus qualified, all according to the published books of Alice Bailey. Full footnote information is provided throughout. This is Part 1 of a two-part article.

Introduction

As the light of Hierarchy magnetically attracts more and more seekers to its radiant periphery, the concept of integration into higher centers dawns in the minds of many. In esoteric terminology, this is the process of initiation, preceded by discipleship. In fact, the Tibetan Master who dictated through Alice Bailey discussed spiritual progress almost exclusively in terms of the different degrees of discipleship and initiation. It is therefore imperative that the seeker gain a clear understanding of what these various terms mean.

Definition of the Term “Disciple”

According to the Tibetan, the word “disciple” is the term properly to be applied to all who

strive to cooperate with Hierarchy and the Plan, thus including all grades of seekers from the most naïve beginner on the spiritual path all the way up to and including the chief officiant of the Hierarchy, the Christ.¹ Obviously, then, the term “disciple” covers a wide range of consciousness and capability, and in so doing, its use diminishes the role of differentiation amongst seekers and augments instead the factor of solidarity, such that we get the idea of a great band of diversely talented and skilled workers all striving toward the same goals. However, the all-inclusive definition of discipleship offered above remains somewhat broad and even ambiguous, especially for those interested in identifying the exact stages upon the path at which various attainments should have occurred.

Fortunately, the Tibetan did offer more detail concerning the way in which he used the word “disciple” when speaking of such persons as they are found in the Human Kingdom. In this sense, a disciple is a human person vitally concerned with effecting constructive efforts in behalf of Humanity, rendering aid to the higher forces working to advance evolution, and unfolding the powers of the soul or consciousness aspect within self.²

Such a person, the Tibetan stated, has attained to a state of mind relatively immune to the seductive powers of the world of appearances with its multitudinous distractions and inessen-

About the Author

M. Temple Richmond is an internationally recognized authority on esoteric teachings and author of the milestone book *Sirius*. She recently founded the StarLight Ashram, an online discussion group dedicated to the study of esoteric astrology: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/StarLightAshram>.

tial invitations. Instead, the person who qualifies for discipleship status evidences a more fundamental interest in understanding and promoting the spiritual oneness of all existence and in facilitating the progress of all things toward recognition of eternal spirit.³

From this position in consciousness, the disciple seeks no special attention in a way that would further the sense of isolated individuality, but rather places attention upon the principles of spiritual living.⁴ On the world scene, she or he desires only that which is best for all of Humanity, and not just one subgrouping within it.⁵ In her or his concern for the state of the world, the disciple is one who does not waste time in lamenting the dire state of things, but instead one who works quietly and diligently at making a positive difference wherever she or he may be.⁶

In fact, the disciple is one who guards all her or his words with infinite care, knowing that speech is the most occult power for manifestation in existence and the means of all creation.⁷ The disciple therefore only speaks into existence those conditions which are in alignment with the values of the higher planes, an exacting standard to be sure, but one in keeping with the fact that the disciple by definition is one who has transferred consciousness from the four lower subplanes of the mental plane to the three higher subplanes.⁸

This focus on higher mental levels allows for the expression of three effects of a purificatory nature for which all disciples are known:

- the ability to dispel illusions on the lower mental plane,
- the ability to dissipate glamour on the astral levels, and
- the ability to disidentify from *maya* on the physical plane, thus conferring the ability to pour light through the etheric centers to the surrounding environment.⁹

The disciple is thus one who, by right of consciousness and nature of energy field, dissolves clouds of wrongly directed energies and misplaced desires, pointing the way toward truth and higher values.

A disciple is further distinguished from the mass of Humanity in that she or he is, according to the Tibetan, not entirely controlled by the alternation of experience between pain and pleasure as are so many of the millions whose lives are but continuous dramas of positive and negative excitement. By contrast, the disciple is one who lives more purposefully, electing to turn continuously toward the light and joy of the soul or the bliss of the monad, even in those circumstances which would most surely evoke pique in average or mass Humanity.¹⁰ This is due to the fact that the individual worthy of the title “disciple” realizes that in essence, she or he is not the physical, emotional, or mental sheaths, but the soul or beyond that - the Will aspect in action.¹¹

Thus, there emerges a picture of the disciple as an individual of some considerable psychospiritual attainment, one who has located her or his locus of control in the world of eternal values rather than in the domain of quick thrills and momentary gratifications, and who has made a commitment within self to be proactive in behalf of enhancing true spiritual quality of life wherever life may be found. Further, a person worthy of discipleship status shall have arranged the circumstances of life to allow for extensive efforts in behalf of some spiritual enterprise greater than the personal life, for as the Tibetan has said, “All disciples of any standing gather around them the few or the many that they have found themselves able to aid....”¹² Thus, yet another telling mark of the disciple is the tendency to attract a group and to supply that group with constructive inspiration.

As a result, the disciple is one whose character and capacities have qualified her or him to enter into a subjective or telepathic relationship with one of the Ashrams of the Masters,¹³ and is thus fundamentally attuned to the major work in the world which must go forward under the Divine Plan.

Perhaps these distinctions make more clear the meaning of the term disciple as used by the Tibetan Master. Next, let us turn to the definition of the term “initiate.”

Definition of the Term “Initiate”

According to the Tibetan, there are seven degrees of initiates on our planet,¹⁴ representing a very great range of attainment, a situation which obviously serves to further complicate any attempt to define the term. Given this, an exploration of initiation and of the seven grades mentioned is in order.

Initiation itself, the Tibetan held, is “but another name for synthesis and fusion”¹⁵ and a “process of developing inclusiveness.”¹⁶ In other words, the initiate learns to include and embrace more and more of the totality of manifested existence, including the higher worlds not normally sensed by average Humanity.

The Tibetan described this journey of discovery this way: “Initiation is essentially a penetration into areas of the divine consciousness which are not within the normal field of consciousness of a human being. This initiatory penetration is achieved by the disciple through reflective meditation, the development of an interpretive spiritual understanding, and the use of the trained discriminative mind.”¹⁷

Naturally, progress on this path entails the increasing realization of unity with all that exists and the essential oneness of the self with all other selves. This increasing realization of unity results in a widening sphere of perception that continuously enlarges until it includes the entirety of creation, bringing with it the ability to see and hear on all the seven systemic (and eventually cosmic) planes. Parallel to this development, initiation entails a vastly increased awareness of Divine Intention and a greatly enhanced ability to enter into knowledge of the consequent Divine Plan and to further its manifestation.¹⁸

As the individual opens her or his mind and heart to all that is, initiation becomes a graduated sequence of integration into greater and greater centers of force, starting with admission into a Master’s group, leading later to assimilation with Hierarchy as a whole, and ultimately, into assimilation into Shamballa, the planetary head center itself.¹⁹ Indeed, as the Tibetan has revealed, every step upon the Path of Initiation serves to increase the individual’s recognition of membership in varying assemblages and groups of beings, such that initiation essentially becomes “an expanding series of inclusive recognitions.”²⁰

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In simplest terms then, it could be said that at the psychological level, the path of initiation transforms the self-conscious individual into the group conscious unit.²¹ Energies evoked by the individual unit itself bring this about,²² making for an acknowledgement of the many collectivities of being to which any unit belongs in the upward scale of evolutionary lives.

On the practical level, this involves the relinquishment of all personality reactions which are separative in nature, resulting in “a series of progressive renunciations”²³ which are characteristic of

the path of discipleship and initiation. These and an encounter with varying types of specialized energies describe the experience of the striving seeker along the path of initiation.

In fact, the encounter with energies is a critical theme of the initiatory process, which itself is in reality “a great experiment with energy,” according to the Tibetan Master.²⁴ In this regard, the Tibetan stated, “Every initiation is a process of energy transmission from a higher centre of energy to a lower; every initiation charges the initiate with electrical force.... These transmissions of energy enhance the magnetic-attractive force of the initiate, and at the same time are eliminative in their ef-

fects.”²⁵ It is these eliminative effects, consequent upon the impact of energies, which result in the renunciations along the path which are so characteristic of the discipleship situation. These must be taken into consideration, along with the basic ray energies encountered at the various initiations,²⁶ which reveal the archetypal or universal content of the various initiations.

Indeed, the encounter with energies is the core issue of initiation. The Tibetan stated it this way: “Initiation is in fact a process wherein the initiate is taught how to work with energy, how to use the creative, attractive and dynamic energies in accordance with the Hierarchical Plan in order to bring about the precipitation of the planetary Purpose into the outer field of manifestation.”²⁷ Thus, skilled recognition and management of energies constitute two of the main preoccupations of the disciple-initiate. Along with this, there proceeds the effort to glean the purposes under which our planetary evolution proceeds, for initiation not only concerns the encounter with energies, but this within the context of grasping the nature of Will.²⁸

Understanding of the Will Aspect in fact distinguishes the processes of initiation, especially from the Third Initiation onward, from the more general processes of discipleship and the earlier processes of personality unfoldment. In fact, the Tibetan has characterized the Path of Initiation as a training process fundamentally concerned with the evolution of the Will,²⁹ the Will standing behind the love-wisdom nature discovered in the processes of discipleship.

The Three Stages of Discipleship: Probation, Discipleship, and Initiation

Thus, the Path of Initiation is distinguished from the Path of Discipleship in this way. These two are then further distinguished from what the Tibetan has called the Path of Probation, which follows the workings of the Third Aspect, in contrast to the First and Second Aspects driving the Paths of Initiation and Discipleship respectively.³⁰

The Tibetan offered a tabulation in which this point was made. There he differentiated between the three segments of the evolutionary journey in the following way.³¹

The first segment he named the Path of Evolution and Probation. It concerns the unfoldment of intellect and of sensory perception and expresses itself through the personality and the activities of Humanity in general.

The second he named the Path of Discipleship, which is the portion of the path concerning the unfoldment of the love nature and the buddhic principle, expressing through the nature of the soul and the endeavors of Hierarchy.

The third portion of the path he termed the Path of Initiation, stating that it concerns the unfoldment of the will and the achievement of synthesis, expressing through the monad and the dynamic radiations of Shamballa.

To this might be added the more specific information regarding the precise levels of initiation implied. The Path of Probation includes all of Humanity, even those who have not yet taken any initiations whatsoever. The Path of Discipleship can be said to refer to initiates of the First and Second Degree status, and even those between the Second and Third. Lastly, the Path of Initiation refers to those just nearing the Third Initiation, those of Third Degree status, and those well beyond the Transfiguration Initiation.

In sum, the relevant points may be placed in tabulation.

Path	Probation	Discipleship	Initiation
Center Inspiring	Humanity	Hierarchy	Shamballa
Group Manifesting	Humanity	Disciples	Initiates
Initiatory Status	Before the first Initiation	Initiations 1 & 2	Initiation 3 and higher
Level	Personality	Soul	Monad
Function	Intellect	Love	Will

The Seven Initiations Specified

The previous sections have highlighted the definition of the terms “disciple” and “initiate.” It remains, however, to specifically enumerate the seven distinct grades of initiates discussed by the Tibetan Master. The entirety of the seven initiations has been named by the Tibetan in the following way:³²

1. The Birth
2. The Baptism
3. The Transfiguration
4. The Renunciation
5. The Revelation
6. The Decision
7. The Resurrection

In order to facilitate recognition of the various stages thus represented, a psychospiritual profile of each of the seven follows.

The First or Birth Initiation

The First or Birth Initiation is so named because it signifies the occurrence within the individual of what the Tibetan Master has termed “the birth of the Christ in the cave of the heart,”³³ which is to say, the first glimmerings of the fact that the individual is an incarnated soul living out a meaningful path in a spiritual universe. As a result, this initiation constitutes the spiritual moment which marks the initial entry into a spiritual path starting with the adoption of a basic spiritual orientation³⁴ and leading ultimately to cosmic realizations.³⁵

According to the Ageless Wisdom tradition as articulated by the Tibetan, the individual who arrives at and takes the First Initiation senses strongly that there is a spiritual component to self and life, but all the same, he or she still falls very short of consistently and readily responding to the voice of the soul in all matters.³⁶ He or she may therefore make what would appear to be many mistaken evaluations and choices, frequently falling to the glimmers of the personality worlds, and only with strident effort regaining a proper orientation. Frequent episodes of alienation from spiritual core may be his or her lot. As a result, the life path of a First-Degree initiate may therefore be con-

stantly beset with spiritual angst and efforts to reclaim that which was once glimpsed.

Even so, the individual who has taken the First Initiation demonstrates a meaningful degree of control over the physical appetites, including those for food, drink, and sexual expression.³⁷ In fact, the attainment of a reasonably well ordered lifestyle through right self discipline is one of the benchmarks qualifying an individual for the taking of this initiation.³⁸ Even though control of all appetites may not be perfect, such control is at this stage sufficient to demonstrate that the individual realizes that there exist standards for right living which ought to be followed.

Thus, it is apparent that an initiate of the First Degree is a genuine spiritual seeker, yet one who also suffers from many character failings. He or she is also one who has achieved significant spiritual success by determining to live in a relatively orderly way and by maintaining a persistent background belief that the universe is sentient and intelligent in nature, rather than random and meaningless.

Even so, much improvement remains to be made in regard to regulating personal impulses on all levels. Fortunately, the individual at this stage does understand that he or she is responsible for self and its effects on the surrounding world.³⁹ This marks a significant degree of improvement over the unruly psychology of the mob and mass, which recognizes only fleetingly or not at all that the rule of law and principle should guide in all things. From this disorderly and self-serving point of view, the First-Degree initiate has differentiated himself or herself by virtue of recognizing and accepting the basic imperative to observe self-control.

Self-control at this level is largely construed and expressed as physical in nature, a fact reflected in the Tibetan’s allusion to this initiation as equivalent to the experience of Humanity in the Third or Lemurian Race,⁴⁰ during which time physical self control was gained by the mass. Even though by today’s standards this is not viewed as much of an achievement, within the overall context of evolution, it nonetheless represents a significant advance. Thus,

the achievement of the First Initiation marks a noteworthy stage on the Path.

The general improvement in spiritual functioning achieved at this initiation is very much a consequence of the activation of the various centers associated with the accomplishment of this step on the path. According to the Tibetan, the heart, throat, and sacral centers are all implicated in this initiation.⁴¹ Each of these is in some way affected by the energy applied to the initiate by higher sources at this point. Activation of the heart center produces greater idealism and altruism, while that of the throat and sacral centers facilitates the transformation of the reproductive urge dominant in the sacral center into the higher creativity of the throat center.

Thus, the transfer of energy from the sacral to the throat center is begun in earnest at this time, continuing as the path unfolds. The process is much facilitated by the application of Ray Seven energies, one of the special functions of which is the process of transfer from any center to another,⁴² for it is this ray with which this initiation is an encounter.⁴³ The Seventh Ray also naturally resonates with the sacral center, which center is governed by the ray associated with this initiation.⁴⁴ As a result of all this Ray Seven stimulation, the First-Degree initiate evidences all the struggles to bring the sacral center under the control of the Ray of Order and Organization, as opposed to letting its energies run wild in accord with every passing whim.

According to the Tibetan, there have been many individuals who have dealt successfully with these issues and have thus distinguished themselves, and many more yet so to do. Here is a suggestion of the numbers of persons on

this planet who are reported to have reached and completed the First Initiation.

Over the course of evolution on our planet, "many millions" of our Earth Humanity have qualified for and passed the First Initiation, according to the Tibetan.⁴⁵ This figure includes all souls who have ever achieved the Birth Initiation, whether incarnated or not at the time of the Tibetan's statement in this regard. In the mid 1900s, "thousands" of persons were said to have been found existing at this initiatory level,⁴⁶ presumably incarnated and living in personality expression at that

time. Only a few decades later and in that same century, great progress had apparently been made, for "many thousands" were reported by the Tibetan to have passed this, the Birth Initiation, at that point.⁴⁷ Greater numbers even than that were promised for the future by the Master, who stated unequivocally that the First Initiation lay within range of achievement by even the masses of Humanity,⁴⁸ and that literally "millions" shall have attained to this initiation by the year 2025 A.D."⁴⁹

This rapid increase in the rate of attainment for this initiation is facilitated,

the Tibetan said, by the influx of the Ray Seven energies associated with the Age of Aquarius,⁵⁰ for it is the Seventh Ray with which this initiation is an encounter, and the Seventh Ray which serves to bring together body and soul,⁵¹ emphasizing the need for ordered and rhythmic daily living.

The Tibetan offered a general landmark for distinguishing those who have passed the First Initiation. He stated that "...all those who truly love their fellowmen, who are interested in the esoteric teaching, and who seek to disci-

Whereas in the experiences of the First Initiation, it is the sacral center to which transformative powers are directed, that process moves up one center at the Second Initiation to the solar plexus. This results in terrific turbulence caused in the solar plexus center as it is transformed from the seat of possessiveness to the processing station for energies on the way to the more altruistic heart center.

pline themselves in order to attain greater beauty of life..." have taken at least the First or Birth Initiation.⁵² Thus, these are some of the minimum requirements or landmarks for which the esoteric astrologer might look in attempting to get a fix upon the initiatory status of any person for whom esoteric astrological study is to be undertaken.

The "many millions" of individuals to whom the Tibetan has referred as having attained to this initiation by 2025 A.D. may be a figure which includes both those in incarnation and those not incarnated at that time, or perhaps it simply refers to incarnated souls existing in personality expression around that date who shall have taken the First Initiation. Thus, it is somewhat uncertain exactly what this figure means, but it certainly shows that the First Gate is not exceedingly narrow and may be traversed by many an aspiring soul. It is well to keep this in mind and to realize that attainment of this initiation, while significant, is not as rare as may have once been thought, and that furthermore, it is destined to become much more widespread and common.

Ultimately, when the whole of Humanity or some major portion of it succeeds in passing requirements for the First Initiation, this development will, as the Tibetan Master has said, "...make possible the return of the Hierarchy and the restoration of the mysteries."⁵³ Given that the return or externalization of the Hierarchy and the restoration of the mysteries are intimately bound up with the reappearance of the Christ, this last statement is tantamount to saying that the taking of the First Initiation by a major portion of Humanity will facilitate the much awaited reappearance of the Christ or Head of Hierarchy.

It would seem that the emerging worldwide movement promoting ecological awareness serves as evidence that a significant portion of Humanity is indeed cognizant of its collective and individual responsibilities in regard to the physical environment. This is surely an encouraging development and one that may well suggest that a widespread achievement of First Initiation standards of thought and behavior is in process of manifestation.

The Second or Baptism Initiation

Just as the attainment of physical self control characterizes the First Initiation, so the attainment of emotional self-control characterizes the Second or Baptism Initiation, named after a rite involving immersion or ablution to reflect the fact that this initiation concerns and requires the right management of emotional energy currents emanating from the water-like astral plane. The Tibetan also alluded to this initiation as a correlate to the Atlantean Race,⁵⁴ the experience and unfoldment of which was primarily on the astral or emotional level - with its virtues of sentiency and its vices of wrongly directed desires.

All these descriptive terms serve to underscore the fact that the Second Initiation is a great encounter with the Sixth Ray and the sixth (or astral) plane, thus engaging the solar plexus center of the individual, which is itself an expression of Ray Six energies.

Whereas in the experiences of the First Initiation, it is the sacral center to which transformative powers are directed, that process moves up one center at the Second Initiation to the solar plexus. This results in terrific turbulence caused in the solar plexus center as it is transformed from the seat of possessiveness to the processing station for energies on the way to the more altruistic heart center.⁵⁵

At the same time, the throat center is vivified,⁵⁶ thus making way for the greater inclination toward higher thought which will increasingly replace emotional reactions and preoccupations. There are thus at least two centers brought to prominence by both the labors of the seeker and the energies brought to bear from higher agencies in the initiation process. That being so, it remains that the center of greatest importance and attention at this point is the solar plexus, which must deliberately be tamed and intentionally brought into a state of reasonable quiescence.

The Second Initiation thus marks the phase on the path at which the individual accepts re

sponsibility for the emotional energies that he or she generates, absorbs, cultivates, and radiates. Before the Second Initiation, the human unit generally feels it is his or her right to indulge in any mood or emotional reaction rising up in response to inner or outer conditions. However, the spiritual path teaches that emotional reactions should be closely regulated, and this for two reasons: 1) such reactions may be based exclusively on personal sentiment, devoid of a greater perspective which might leaven perception and thereby prevent wrong response, and 2) such reactions, if colored by anger and spite, may in fact work harm upon others through the infliction of emotional or physical suffering by words spoken in haste, physical actions taken, or simply by energies emitted through the astral body. The spiritual seeker therefore willingly imposes on self the requirement to examine all reactions before embracing them. Consistent and successful effort in this direction earns the seeker the right to take the Second Initiation.

This is inasmuch to say that Second-Degree initiates are those who have learned to calm the waters of the astral or emotional plane through their own persistent efforts at regular meditation and moment to moment self-regulation. It is in this way that is brought about the ending of emotional storms, a definite point of attainment associated with this stage in evolution.⁵⁷ Violent and intense emotional reactions such as anger, resentment, spite, unwarranted suspicion, fierce competitiveness, unreasoning affectional passion, depression and despair are all confronted by and hence greatly reduced in the Second-Degree initiate, as is the tendency to seek a target upon which to transfer guilt, shame, and blame. The Second Initiation thus marks a definite point of psychological maturity and consequent poise.

As a result of the quieting and organizing of the solar plexus and the subduing of the astral body thus attained, the light of the soul is enabled to shine through the personality with much greater clarity and power. Thus, the Second-Degree initiate evidences a marked level of spiritual aspiration, right aspirational focus, greater outward directed divine love energies, and a sincere longing to add to the

truth, beauty, and goodness of the world in service to the Plan.⁵⁸ He or she is much more aware of the need in the world than are those at an earlier stage on the Path,⁵⁹ so much so that one of the hallmarks of this stage is a tendency to be somewhat overwhelmed via the sentient response mechanism as it registers the degree of suffering extant. This discomfort is an issue that will be addressed as the Path unfolds, bringing with it proper perspective and wise methods for ameliorating conditions of concern. The virtue here, however, is that the Second-Degree initiate has attained to a state in which the good of the greatest number takes precedence over the advantage of the few.⁶⁰

Even so, the keenly sensitive astral body of the Second-Degree initiate, though much tamed and purified, still contains the capacity to over-react, and this it will occasionally do in response to what are regarded as distressing world conditions. However, there is a difference between this sort of astral reaction and the more primitive and essentially possessive upwellings characteristic of those on earlier stages of the Path, for the astral upsets of the Second-Degree initiate are frequently tinged with and in fact driven by an underlying idealism of a fairly refined nature. This nascent idealism leads to acute pain upon perceiving the divergence between the ideal and the apparently "real." Individuals caught in such dilemmas are frequently to be encountered in metaphysical environments. It is therefore well to be aware of the landmarks proclaiming the Second-Degree initiatory status.

Second-Degree initiates seek mental polarization⁶¹ through meditation and study, for they realize that the mental plane is the next field of endeavor and that a durable mental stability is much needed in the effort to counteract the effect of the polar opposites to be found on the astral plane. These opposites interact constantly and beget in the individual a nearly unending fluctuation of mood between happiness and misery, satisfaction and non-satisfaction, assurance and doubt, courage and fear, and more.⁶² Such mood states are the manifestations of the very dualities which must be surmounted to pass this the Second Initiation, which signifies a degree of mastery on the as-

tral plane. A constant point of spiritual focus is thus needed to weaken the claims of the astral plane upon the individual.

Influence from the astral plane is of course not entirely without merit. When acting from its higher subplanes, it begets the kinder human sentiments and the genuine longing for contact with emissaries of pure truth and higher energies which Second-Degree initiates espouse. However, the generally deceptive appearances of the astral plane must still be seen through, and this requires a shift from a devotional approach to an intellectual one.⁶³ Thus, those who have fully taken the Second Initiation are much involved with the attainment of mental polarization, which accomplishment takes place between the Second and Third Initiations.⁶⁴

Thus, from the more rational point of view adopted by the Second-Degree initiate, the outlook is less irritated, less mood-driven, less judgmental, and less given to infatuation than is the point of view in earlier stages on the path. This is so for the many reasons already given and for the important fact that Second-Degree initiates have learned to leaven their point of view with the recognition of the Divine in all things and all persons,⁶⁵ not just those of a particular religious or political persuasion, thus disengaging themselves from any overly rigid or fanatical belief system.⁶⁶ Thus, it might be said that freedom from fanaticism of any kind is one of the most noticeable of all landmarks signifying the status of the Second Degree.

Because of the more placid condition of the astral body, the Second-Degree initiate arrives at a certain degree of ability to gather helpful and clarifying information from the higher worlds. According to the Tibetan Master, the initiate of this degree "...can read the akashic records and ascertain the past, thereby enabling himself to work intelligently in the present..."⁶⁷ In other words, he or she arrives at the ability to gather knowledge of past lives, reincarnational cycles, and karmic issues, thereby the more wisely to manage present situations.⁶⁸

The widespread interest in past lives evidenced by the New Age movement would seem to answer to this feature of the Second Initiation very well, suggesting that many in this movement are within range of taking this initiation, or in fact have already done so. This conclusion would seem to be consistent with the emerging norms in the New Age movement, such as unconditional love, forgiveness preferred over bitterness, acceptance of the doctrine of reincarnation, and a nearly universal tendency to seek answers for present challenges in information from higher worlds. Thus, the popularity of the New Age movement might suggest that there are many who are now attracted to the fundamental standards of the Second Initiation.

The Third or Transfiguration Initiation

The Third-Degree initiate has attained an even more profound degree of spiritual self-recollectedness, having reached this initiation from "a level tableland of experience and of consciousness, and not from the heights of aspiration, or from fanatical sacrifice, or from the standpoint of a devotion which handicaps,"⁶⁹ all of which are characteristic of the more astral point of view dominating the previous stage on the Path. Instead, the Third Gate is passed by virtue of having attained a significant clarity devoid of the more gross glammers and illusions to which the soul is subject during incarnation.⁷⁰

The name of this initiation reflects that fact. Called the Transfiguration, it marks a radical departure from the dominance of the threefold personality vehicle which has been in effect for the unit since the ancient past.⁷¹ According to the Tibetan, the word transfiguration in this context refers to the fact that, at the Third Initiation, "the personality is irradiated by the full light of the soul," while at the same time, "the three personality vehicles are completely transcended; they have become simply forms through which spiritual love may flow out into the world..."⁷² In fact, the astral body is said to "disappear" at this initiation, the buddhic vehicle becoming the main instrument of sentience.⁷³

Thus, the initiate is liberated from the “alluring imprisonment of the three worlds,” or the physical, astral, and mental planes, as never before.⁷⁴ This occurs as a result of strenuous efforts to master the dynamics of the mental plane and to complete the submergence of the personal point of view in the greater need of the whole.⁷⁵ The initiate is freed from the thralldom of the lower mind and can function at will on the plane of buddhi, or the intuition.⁷⁶ Further, the light of the monad first makes contact with the mental body at this initiation,⁷⁷ affording the initiate a much enhanced perception of freedom, bliss, and infinity as they are known by the monad.

From this new perspective, self consciousness gives way to group consciousness,⁷⁸ and all sense of separateness dissolves in the face of identification with the Life Aspect in all things.⁷⁹ This radical leap forward in consciousness allows the initiate, according to the Tibetan Master, to “...enter somewhat into the state of consciousness of our planetary Logos, sense His destiny, and vision fleetingly the wonder of the consummation.”⁸⁰

Obviously, this is not a casual occurrence, but rather one founded on thorough preparation.

This initiation requires the careful training of the mind nature so that it can rightly receive and distribute energies,⁸¹ the implication being that any Third-Degree initiate shall evidence a marked degree of mental poise, self-control, focus, and sensitivity to the world of energies.

Passage through this gate also requires the acquisition of occultly scientific knowledge.⁸² Efforts in this direction culminate in the revelation accorded at the Third Initiation, which involves the secrets of physical plane electric-

ity and the methods by which thought directs the many levels of divine substance to become form.⁸³ Further, the nature of our Planetary Logos is unveiled at this, the Transfiguration Initiation.⁸⁴ Clearly, knowledge of this nature places a great deal of power in the hands of the Third-Degree initiate, but he or she is entirely groomed for this by the standards of thought and behavior which must be in place, such that no misuse of powers can result.⁸⁵

All these attainments reflect the fact that the Third Initiation is an encounter with the Fifth Ray, The Ray of Science and Concrete Knowl-

[T]he Third Initiation is an encounter with the Fifth Ray, The Ray of Science and Concrete Knowledge, which ray enables the initiate to use the mind as the major instrument of service. It is at this point on the initiatory path that the individual masters the capacity to manipulate thought matter consciously, and perfects the ability to create and vivify thoughtforms that are clear and well-defined, driven by and pulsating with the spirit of service.

edge, which ray enables the initiate to use the mind as the major instrument of service.⁸⁶

It is at this point on the initiatory path that the individual masters the capacity to manipulate thought matter consciously,⁸⁷ and perfects the ability to create and vivify thoughtforms that are clear and well-defined, driven by and pulsating with the spirit of service.⁸⁸ These accomplishments attest to the activation of the head centers,⁸⁹ especially that of the *ajna* or brow center,⁹⁰ consequent with this level of attainment.

Thus, the Third-Degree initiate is

likely to present the appearance of a highly knowledgeable individual who is not easily befuddled by complexity or thrown into a tailspin by relatively ephemeral conditions. He or she is likely to demonstrate, on the other hand, a marked degree of purposeful thought and activity, especially in pursuit of the higher things of life, even if he or she is not overtly a student of metaphysics or occultism. Many fields of study will suffice for the training and right expression of the Third-Degree initiate,

including conventional mathematics and science, for these disciplines seek to get at the principles behind manifestation, in keeping with the interests of the Third Initiation in the deeper secrets of existence.

In keeping with the decidedly mental and intellectual character of the Third Degree, the Tibetan has equated this initiation with the Third or Aryan Race,⁹¹ that lengthy period during which the Human Kingdom is destined to unfold and actualize its mental potential. This is as compared to the unfoldment of the physical nature during the Lemurian period and the astral during the Atlantean, or the First and Second races respectively, for the first three initiations parallel the large developments of the first three entirely human races.⁹²

Each of the races and initiations involves a great discovery concerning the fullness of divine potential. Whereas the great discovery at the heart of the Second Initiation concerns the reality of Divine Love, the analogous discovery at the core of the Third Initiation concerns Divine Purpose.⁹³ Once this initiation is taken, the Will or Purpose Aspect dominates the initiate,⁹⁴ causing a marked distinction from those at this grade and those at any lower level. A small hint in this direction can be gathered from the fact that because of attunement to the Purpose Aspect through the monad, the Third-Degree Initiate can to some extent appreciate the objectives of the Planetary Logos⁹⁵ and can via that channel even respond to energies coming from the Solar Logos.⁹⁶

As might be thus expected then, the service range of the Third-Degree initiate is much broader in scope than is that of the Second-Degree initiate, for those who have passed through the Transfiguration demonstrate, according to the Tibetan, an ability to "...work wisely, intelligently and harmoniously with many diverse types, and to co-operate in large plans and wield wide influence."⁹⁷

The significant advance in effective occult functioning and reliability of character consequent with this initiation qualify the initiate to cooperate with Hierarchy as never before. Third-Degree initiates are very much less likely to introduce personality complications

into any work with which they may be charged, unlike the more temperamental Second- and First-Degree initiates, for the Third-Degree initiate is able to interact with all persons and conditions on the basis of an even-handed approach constituted of equal parts divine regard and appropriate objectivity. As a result, not much in the way of a clean-up effort on the part of higher-degree initiates will be necessitated when an initiate of this degree is sent into a situation. The Third-Degree initiate can be trusted in ways not possible in regard to First- and Second-Degree initiates, who are in the first case still prey to emotional storms, fits of competition, jealousy, and in the second, to blunders inspired by overzealous idealism and excess affectional sentiment. The Third-Degree initiate is more impersonal and pragmatic than either of these, and therefore less likely to misjudge human character. This clear vision helps in wisely navigating organizational and other social environments into which the Third-Degree initiate may be sent for various purposes under the Plan.

Since arrival at the Third Degree signifies the first genuine availability of the worker in dependable collaboration with efforts toward manifestation of the Plan, this initiation is considered by Hierarchy the first step of real significance, "The First Hierarchical Initiation."⁹⁸ It is also the first point at which the initiate is definitely linked with the Great White Lodge on the star Sirius, thus rendering this initiation the First Sirian Initiation⁹⁹ as well.

Attainment of this initiatory level, though challenging, is promised by the Tibetan as an achievable goal. He estimated that the number of seekers who would have taken the Transfiguration Initiation by the end of the twentieth century would be in the thousands,¹⁰⁰ with "many more initiates of the third degree than ever before" present in incarnation by that time.¹⁰¹

The Master even encouraged effort toward this initiation, voicing an appeal for the Fourth or Human Kingdom to take its seeking beyond the soul to make connection with the life aspect¹⁰² through the monad, which process is begun in earnest at the Transfiguration Initiation. Further, he stated that the major work of

the Christ upon reappearing would address potential to take this and the next initiation, nourishing the spiritual aspirants of the world so that they will be enabled to take the Third and even the Fourth Initiations.¹⁰³

And finally, the Tibetan gave the sign of approval from Hierarchy that initiations beyond the Second are relevant for seekers in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, stating in the mid -twentieth century, “Students today have made much progress towards the control of the personality, and the disciples in the world are now so numerous that the hierarchical emphasis is today upon the states of consciousness which follow the third initiation.”¹⁰⁴

These states of consciousness are inevitably bound up with perception of the nature of the monad, for as the Tibetan has said, the Third or Transfiguration Initiation represents the point at which personality or form life is finally transcended. Following that, the monad becomes the object of desired attainment, its spiritual pressure being increasingly felt by the progressing point of light.¹⁰⁵ The initiate is then, according to the Tibetan, no longer concerned with the development of sentiency toward cultivation of a more greatly loving heart, as in the First and Second Initiations, but is instead preoccupied with the fusion of the individual will with the divine will and with the mechanics of service to the Plan.¹⁰⁶

Thus, present and future times are likely to be conditioned by the presence of initiates who, having some time past integrated the Love-Wisdom aspect of existence, now have their sights trained upon the Will nature. This type of focus will present the appearance of a seeker who is steady in pursuit of service objectives, able quickly and easily to identify the non-essential and set it aside, advised about the key concepts in science and metaphysics, who even attains on occasion to a greater perception of cosmic bliss via the monad, and who is decidedly non-sentimental though thoroughly dedicated to the dissemination of goodwill to all. It will be a psychology relatively new to the world, nevertheless, one which deserves to be recognized as a valid step on the way.

[To be continued.]

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- 1 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age I*, Lucis, 1944, pp. 780-781.
 - 2 Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, Lucis, 1922, p. 71.
 - 3 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
 - 4 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology II*, Lucis, 1942. pp. 177-178.
 - 5 Alice A. Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age II*, Lucis, 1955, p. 690.
 - 6 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 74.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 74; *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 981.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, p. 179.
 - 9 Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour, A World Problem*, Lucis, 1950, p. 264.
 - 10 Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 73.
 - 11 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, Lucis, 1960, p. 107.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 709.
 - 13 *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 633.
 - 14 See *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 699, where the Tibetan stated that though there are nine initiations total, only seven apply directly to our Earth evolution.
 - 15 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology*, Lucis, 1951, p. 241.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 503.
 - 17 *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 431.
 - 18 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 13.
 - 19 *Discipleship in the New Age I*, p. 685.
 - 20 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 341.
 - 21 *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 286.
 - 22 *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 534-535.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 341.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, p. 549.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 735.
 - 26 As the Tibetan has stated in *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 338, 340, and 567-656, the seven initiations relevant to our planetary evolution are encounters with the ray energies in the following manner:

First Initiation	7 th Ray
Second Initiation	6 th Ray
Third Initiation	5 th Ray
Fourth Initiation	4 th Ray
Fifth Initiation	1 st Ray
Sixth Initiation	3 rd Ray
Seventh Initiation	2 nd Ray

The associations follow an obvious pattern for the first four initiations, with the First Initiation

- starting at the Ray which correlates to the most dense level of manifestation, and then working back through the rays (and related planes) in numerical order. The final three initiations of the seven associated with our planetary evolution then recapitulate and mirror the process whereby the synthesizing schemes in our planet absorb the gains of evolution into unity. This the schemes do in the following order: the Saturn scheme blends with the Uranus scheme, and then the result merges with the Neptune scheme. If the Saturn scheme is accorded Ray 3, the Uranus Ray 1, and the Neptune Ray 2, then the merging of 1 and 3 first and the remaining into 2 fairly well describes process underlying the final three initiations, which first reconcile Rays 1 and 3, and then end on the major note of the solar system, with Initiation 7 representing an encounter with the Second Ray and all its correlates.
- 27 *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 434.
 28 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 97.
 29 *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 613-614.
 30 *Ibid.*, p. 614.
 31 *Ibid.*, p. 614.
 32 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 532.
 33 *Ibid.*, p. 436-437.
 34 *Discipleship in the New Age I*, p. 716.
 35 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Healing*, Lucis, 1953, p. 152.
 36 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 385.
 37 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 82.
 38 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, Lucis, 1934, p. 352.
 39 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 571.
 40 *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 169; *Discipleship in the New Age I*, p. 716.
 41 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 84; *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 152, 572.
 42 *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 445.
 43 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 567.
 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 567, 572.
 45 *Ibid.*, p. 665.
 46 Alice A. Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, Lucis, 1949, pp. 149-150.
 47 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 385.
 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 579, 648.
 49 *Ibid.*, p. 571.
 50 *Ibid.*, p. 569 – 570.
 51 *Ibid.*, p. 672.
 52 *Ibid.*, p. 667.
 53 *Ibid.*, p. 333.
 54 *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 169.
 55 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 683.
- 56 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 85.
 57 *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 577-578, 674.
 58 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, pp. 84, 85; *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 677-678.
 59 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
 60 *Ibid.*, p. 86; *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 678.
 61 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 667.
 62 *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 293.
 63 *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 667, 677.
 64 *Ibid.*, p. 600.
 65 *Ibid.*, p. 679.
 66 *Ibid.*, p. 127.
 67 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 170.
 68 *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 738.
 69 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 127.
 70 *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 383-384.
 71 *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 684-686.
 72 *Ibid.*, p. 278.
 73 *Ibid.*
 74 *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 397.
 75 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, pp. 82-90.
 76 *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 383.
 77 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, pp. 82-90; *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 593.
 78 *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 620.
 79 *A Treatise on White Magic*, p. 299.
 80 *Ibid.*
 81 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 691.
 82 *Ibid.*, pp. 691-692.
 83 *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, pp. 872 – 873; *Initiation, Human and Solar*, pp. 167, 168, 170.
 84 *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 358.
 85 Alice A. Bailey, *Telepathy and the Etheric Vehicle*, Lucis, 1950, p. 87.
 86 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 688.
 87 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 86.
 88 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
 89 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
 90 *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 689.
 91 *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 169.
 92 On the Lemurian, Atlantean, and Aryan races as the first strictly human races, see *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 272.
 93 *Esoteric Astrology*, pp. 300, 606; *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 349.
 94 *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 713.
 95 *Discipleship in the New Age I*, p. 726.
 96 *Esoteric Psychology I*, p. 156.
 97 *Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 121.
 98 *The Rays and the Initiations*, pp. 41, 81, 385, 687.
 99 *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 159; *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 687.
 100 *Discipleship in the New Age II*, p. 337.

¹⁰¹ *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 473.

¹⁰² *Esoteric Healing*, p. 587.

¹⁰³ Alice A. Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, Lucis, 1948, pp. 86 – 87.

¹⁰⁴ *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 511.

¹⁰⁵ *Esoteric Astrology*, p. 606.

¹⁰⁶ *The Rays and the Initiations*, p. 34.