

# **A Roadmap of the Journey Through the Psychic Circles Mortal Stages of Personality Maturation**

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Author's note: The following material is derived from the work of Dr. James Fowler as set forth in his book, "Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning." Fowler's work is based on the stage theories of psychological and social maturation developed by Erick Erickson, Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. I have taken their work and attempted to correlate it with The Urantia Book's material on faith and spiritual growth, in particular the ascent through the psychic circles of consciousness of progressive kinship with the cosmic actuality of the Supreme Being.

## **Contents**

### **Introduction**

**Primal Faith: The personality foundations of the faith adventure** (Infancy to the beginning of language acquirement).

**Stage 1: Faith in self-constructed mental images which represent feelings about life and attitudes toward primary caregivers** (From approximately 3 years of age until the arrival of a Thought Adjuster).

**Stage 2: Mythic/Literal Faith; Faith that beliefs and attitudes of the family as well as stories told within the family and community are literal representations of reality.** (Arrival of Adjuster to the onset of puberty). Some people never progress beyond this stage.

**Stage 3: Conventional and Synthesized Faith; Faith attitudes which are synthesized from one's own experience combined with the attitudes expressed within one's significant social communities.** (Ages ~ Adolescence through early adulthood). In many people this stage is sustained through life.

**Stage 4: The Reflective Faith of an Individual; Faith attitudes developed as a result of critical thinking about the elements of one's beliefs** (Ages ~ Early Adulthood—Midlife). May be sustained through life.

**Stage 5: Integrative/Expanding Faith; Faith attitudes which attempt to reach beyond the integrated unconscious processes and the intellectual constructs of the self** (Ages ~ Mid-Life and beyond – unusual before mid-life)

**Stage 6: Universalizing Faith: Faith attitudes of a personality consciously integrated with the Supreme** (Ages: Mid-life and beyond). Very few persons achieve this level of living faith maturity due to its self-transcending nature.

# The Stages

## Introduction

Each of us has begun the journey of faith; a journey whose destination we understand to be the presence of the Universal Father whose nature is ultimate reality, ultimate beauty, ultimate goodness, ultimate truth and divine love. In many ways this journey may be characterized as the gradual transfer of identity from the mortal self to the personality.

Presented here is something of a road map of the portions of this journey which we are likely to encounter during our lives here in this world, progressing from infancy to old age. The revelators tell us that if we embark upon this journey, we are ". . . sure to encounter, and if you have the courage, to traverse, the rugged hills of moral choosing and spiritual progress."

If we know something about the path ahead, which winds through these rugged hills of moral choosing, perhaps we will be better equipped to deal with the uncertainty and difficulty which The Urantia Book guarantees we will encounter.

The Urantia Book refers to this process as the ascent through the psychic circles—the path which leads to a functional consciousness of universe citizenship later in life. This is not a conceptual consciousness consisting mere knowledge, but rather a consciousness that informs behavior flowing from a mature moral and spiritual center.

It is important to understand that this ascent through the psychic circles relates to personality integration with the Supreme Being. Hence, traversing these psychic circles involves the attainment of ever more meaningful levels of spiritualized personality integration with the Supreme and concomitantly, more spiritual creativity within the social milieu in which we find ourselves living.

This ascent through the psychic circles is largely a psycho-social process of personality maturation. On the basis of faith we choose spiritual values with which we manage our social relationships. And this journey through the psychic circles has to do with growth and maturity of the value basis upon which our personality interacts with the personalities of others. It has relatively little to do with the attainment of God consciousness as such.

Third day awakening on the mansion worlds is more dependent on how our personality interacts with others than it is on the degree of God consciousness we've attained. It's an issue of cosmic socialization.

Our road map involves a review of the various developmental contexts through which we pass on our mortal journey. They are *psycho-social* circles. They are circles in the sense that constitute a sequence of gestalts, each having its own ecological balance of values, personal identity, and supportive stories or world views. And the transition from one to the next often

involves crises of one sort or another as our values, identities, and world views get shaken in the process of transition. Fear and uncertainty can become the limiting factors in circle ascension.

### Introduction to The Stages

These stages described herein are very general in nature—they only describe what happens to most people most of the time. Not everyone fits into this pattern. Also, when the ages at which these various stages are likely to be encountered are noted, please be aware that these are *general* age ranges. They indicate when a particular stage is most likely to be encountered. They do not indicate a maximum age by which time a person will make a transition to the next stage. Some people move through all the stages; others move slowly through some of the stages but not all of them; other people get arrested at a particular stage and never move on at all. Transitions between stages may take years if they occur at all.

It is also important to appreciate that these stages refer to faith attitudes which dominate the decision-making processes of the personality. For example, we may hold an intellectual belief that all men and women in the world are our brothers and sisters in the Father’s family, but we may not have reached the stage of faith in which our day-to-day decisions are dominated by this awareness. We may be in intellectual accord with the concept of cosmic citizenship, but this does not mean that our personal identity has been so transformed that all decisions affecting the welfare of other persons are made relative to this truth.

It is helpful to think of these stages as “universe frames” through which we pass as we experience personality development. Here is an outline of the basic stages as they relate to the work of James Fowler and The Urantia Book model of the psychic circles. Included are levels of the Golden Rule and Phases of Philosophy as noted in The Urantia Book.

Review paper 110, section 6, The Seven Psychic Circles. See also the four levels of the realization of values in paper 5, section 5, paragraph 2.

Fowler's Faith Stage	Average Age at Entrance	UB Psychic Circle 110:6	Highlight of Stage	UB Level of Golden Rule 180:5.5-8	UB Phase of Philosophy 101:7.4
1	3 years		Consciousness of Personal Morality		
2	Arrival of Adjuster	Seventh	Consciousness of Social Morality	Level 1	Level 1
3	Adolescence to Early Adulthood				Level 2
4	Early Adulthood to Midlife	Third	Consciousness of Social Systems	Level 2	Level 3
5	Midlife	Second		Level 3	
6	Midlife and beyond	First	Consciousness of Cosmic Citizenship	Level 4	Level 4

These stages of religious development, these “universe frames” may be characterized by five factors whose content changes with growth.

These are:

1. Personal values
2. Social values
3. Supportive stories
4. Faith experience
5. Faith challenges

We will also note the psychological and spiritual crises which characterize the transitions between these stages.

**Primal Faith: The personality foundations of the faith adventure** (Infancy to the beginning of language acquirement)

The foundation for human religious experience is established in our first years of life. During this period the newborn child develops a basic orientation to reality which conditions all subsequent experience. At this stage we develop basic attitudes toward life which may be dominated by trust and hope or suspicion and fear.

These basic attitudes which appear in human life prior to the beginnings of faith are established almost exclusively as a result of the relationship between the newborn child and its caretakers. Our caretakers are the greatest power in our early life. The nature of the relationship which we form with these caretakers greatly influences the nature of the relationship with God which will be formed later in our lives.

*The Urantia Book* refers to parenthood as “the supreme responsibility of human existence.” Jesus “exalted family life as the highest human duty.”

Read about a conversation which Jesus had with John Mark. 177:2.5

In this early stage of life the seeds of trust, courage, hope and love must be nurtured in an environment in which fears of abandonment, inconsistencies and deprivations may be present. The quality of personal interaction, the strength of trust, autonomy, hope and courage developed in this period support all that comes later in faith development.

Once we begin to develop language skills—the ability to use symbols in speech and to engage in ritual play, the doors are open for the true beginnings of the faith adventure.

## Stage 1

**Stage 1 Faith: Faith in self-constructed mental images which represent feelings about life and attitudes toward primary caregivers** (From approximately 3 years of age until the arrival of a Thought Adjuster) The formation of images which represent feelings and the elements of power in our early life occurs here.

### **Elements of Stage 1 Faith**

#### **Stage 1 Personal Values**

In this stage personal values center completely around the needs of the self.

#### **Stage 1 Social Values**

In this stage we learn how to manage life by imitating our primary caretakers. We are powerfully influenced by their examples, moods, actions and the characters in the stories they tell us.

Ideas of justice and fairness are viewed in terms of punishment and reward.

In this stage of development we use the newly developed tools of speech and symbolic representation to organize our sensory experience into units of meaning. During this period we assume without question that the experiences and perceptions we have of a phenomenon represent the only available perspective and that this perspective is shared by everyone else.

#### **Stage 1 Supportive Stories**

Imagination, stimulated by stories, gestures and symbols, and not yet controlled by logical thinking, combines with perception and feelings to create long-lasting images that represent both the protective and threatening powers in our life. These stories help us to order our feelings and perceptions.

The gift or emergent strength of this stage is the birth of imagination, the ability to unify and grasp the world of experience in powerful images when presented in stories which resonate with our intuitive understandings and feelings toward our social environment.

#### **Stage 1 Faith Experience**

We experience faith as trust in primary care givers. Our beliefs are unconsciously assimilated from the basic beliefs and attitudes of family members. We experience a naïve, literal belief in the reality of these stories.

Review 100:1.3 and 108:2.1-2

#### **Stage 1 Faith Challenges**

The challenge of this period is the formation of symbols and images which can hold and order feelings and impressions.

The main factor causing transition to the next stage is the emergence of rational thinking combined with the arrival of a Thought Adjuster. At the heart of this transition is our growing concern to know how life works and to clarify for ourselves the distinctions between what is real and what only seems to be real.

## Stage 2

**Stage 2 Faith: Mythic/Literal Faith; Faith that beliefs and attitudes of the family as well as stories told within the family and community are literal representations of reality.** (Arrival of Adjuster to the onset of puberty). Some people remain at this stage throughout life.

The emergent strength of this stage is the forming of stories of faith; the formation of stories which help to explain our role in the cosmos, and which contain our first symbolizations of the mysterious and the unknown. At this stage we experience entrance into the seventh psychic circle.

Review 110:6.13, “The seventh circle”

### Elements of Stage 2 Faith

#### Stage 2 Personal Values

In this stage personal values may expand slightly to include the needs of family members. Our self-image begins to develop based on images presented by care givers. The self is still at the center of decision making—other people are viewed in terms of how they will impact the needs of the self to feel secure, needed, loved, free, important, and esteemed.

A form of moral judgment emerges which is based on ideas of reciprocal fairness. “I did this for you, now you must do this for me.”

Understandings of God in this stage also take on a pattern of reciprocity. We engage in prayers and acts of praise in an attempt to store up God’s good favor against times when special help or forgiveness may be needed. In this stage, the individual tries to bargain with God. We believe that if we want God’s help and protection we have to do our part – we try to make “deals” with God.

#### Stage 2 Social Values

The boundaries of social consciousness in this stage extend to people who “are like us” in familial, ethnic, racial, class and religious terms. In this stage we learn to make adjustments in our perceptions and to coordinate our own perspective with that of another person found in our immediate world.

This is the faith stage of the school child, though we sometimes find the structures dominant in adolescents and in adults.

The locus of authority is in the family and the family's immediate community. People in authority roles recognized by the family become authority figures for us. Experiences in school create the beginning of awareness that a larger world exists than that of the family and immediate community. Exposure to mass media contributes to this early expansion of our social consciousness.

## **Stage 2 Supportive Stories**

Characteristic of this stage is the ability to find meanings in our experiences by relating them to stories we've been told. In the previous stage, *images* were derived from stories. In this stage, this process is further developed and we are now able to derive *meanings* from the stories which we are told. If we picture the flow of our lives as a river, this stage tells stories that describe the flow from the midst of the stream. In this stage we do not have the ability to step out on the bank beside the river and reflect on the stories about the flow and what they might mean.

In this stage we begin to take on for ourselves the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolize belonging to our community. Beliefs are appropriated with literal interpretations, as are moral rules and attitudes. In this stage, story, drama and myth emerge as ways of finding and giving coherence to experience.

## **Stage 2 Faith Experience**

When we enter this stage of faith development we place full trust in our primary care givers and the values of our significant community. We become idealists and assume that everyone and everything should be perfect—family, friends, teachers, school, neighborhood and church. "Perfection" at this stage is understood to be conformance to the values of our significant community.

Our beliefs are based on stories and symbols of the dominant cultural influence. This may be family, community, church, school and mass media. We tend to possess a great degree of certitude; we have complete confidence in our perceptions (things are either black or white) and in our opinions (we are always right).

## **Stage 2 Faith Challenges**

The task of this stage is the formation of a coherent explanation of the self and world made up of images, beliefs, and values of family and the community to which the family belongs. There is also the beginning of an ability to enter into the perspectives of others.

Our transition into Stage 3 begins with the discovery that there are competing stories whose meanings contradict each other. This leads to reflection on those various meanings. The transition to more formal thinking makes such reflection possible and necessary. Previous

literalism breaks down and an overconfidence in our own assessments leads to disillusionment with previous teachers and teachings. Conflicts between authoritative stories must be faced. For example, conflicts between the Genesis story of creation and evolutionary theory. The discovery of such conflicts as well as growing awareness of a greater world create the need to find some means of unifying the increasingly diverse content of mind and experience.

## **Stage 3**

**Stage 3 Faith: Conventional and Synthesized Faith; Faith attitudes which are synthesized from one's own experience combined with the attitudes expressed within one's significant social communities.** (Ages ~ Adolescence through early adulthood; in many people this stage is never transcended during mortal life.) The emergent strength of this stage is the forming of identity and the shaping of a personal faith

### **Elements of Stage 3 Faith**

#### **Stage 3 Personal Values**

In Stage 3, values center on the needs of self and the support of roles played in the social environment. Moral judgment is based largely on interpersonal expectations and implicit understandings reached between people. Moral judgment is a key element in circle ascension as it progresses from the needs of the mortal self to the welfare of the Supreme.

A distinct self-consciousness develops during this stage.

#### **Stage 3 Social Values**

Stage 3 thinking typically orients to groups or classes other than its own as though they were merely aggregates of individuals. We operate under the assumption that all social relations are simply extensions of interpersonal relationships. A concept of other groups and of society at large as entities with their own internal integrity has not yet formed. We do not think of society in terms of a network of laws, rules, roles and systematically determined patterns designed to serve the interests of a group. This means that other persons are known and evaluated in terms of their supposed personal qualities and interpersonal ways of relating. In a real sense, in this way of knowing, persons are separated from the social system factors shaping and limiting their lives.

The dangers or deficiencies in this stage are twofold. The expectations and evaluations of others can be so compellingly internalized that later autonomy of judgment and action can be jeopardized. Interpersonal betrayals may give rise either to despair about the possibilities of a personal God or to a compensatory intimacy with God unrelated to practical matters of daily life.

The locus of authority lies in the peer group and its leadership, the dominant culture; in the consensus of valued groups, and in personally worthy representatives of belief-value traditions such as respected teachers, priests, bishops, etc.

Our self-image is increasingly derived from roles we play in our families and in our peer relationships. Identity may also be derived from an imagined role in a powerful mythological story.

The world view now includes the family, school, work, media, church, nation, and the world as understood through mass media or schooling.

### **Stage 3 Supportive Stories**

The forming of a personal myth is a primary element of this stage -- the myth of our own becoming, incorporating stories of our past and anticipated future in an image of an ultimate environment unified by the characteristics of our personality.

Because at this stage our religious hunger is for a God who knows, accepts and confirms the self deeply, and who serves as an infinite guarantor of the self with its forming myth of personal identity and faith, it is not surprising that so many of the images for transcendence that appeal to us in this stage have the characteristics of a divinely personal significant other, such as a personal saint, angel, companion or other imagined divine being.

### **Stage 3 Faith Experience**

In this stage, the growing extensions of social boundaries lead to the synthesis of a world view derived from stories and symbols of the family, religion of the family, peer beliefs, and mass media.

Faith must provide a coherent orientation in the midst of an increasingly complex and diverse range of involvements. Faith must unify values and information; it must provide a basis for identity and outlook.

There is acceptance and trust in beliefs of significant communities—family, church, etc. The discovery that all people and situations are imperfect can lead to anger and cynicism.

Stage 3 faith typically has its rise and ascendancy in adolescence, but for many adults it becomes a permanent place of equilibrium. It structures the ultimate environment in interpersonal terms. Its images of unifying value and power derive from the extension of qualities experienced in personal relationships. It is a “conformist” stage in the sense that it is acutely tuned to the expectations and judgments of significant others and as yet does not have a sure enough grasp on its own identity and autonomous judgment to construct and maintain an independent perspective.

At Stage 3 we acquire an “ideology,” a more or less consistent clustering of values and beliefs, but we have not examined it and in a sense are unaware of having it. Differences of outlook with others are experienced as differences in “kind” of person. Authority is located in the incumbents of traditional authority roles (if perceived as personally worthy) or in the consensus of a valued, face-to-face group.

### **Stage 3 Faith Challenges**

The main task of this stage is the synthesis of personal identity from the beliefs of our culture—family, peers, school, church, TV, movies, etc.

In this stage, a personal and largely unreflective synthesis of beliefs and values evolves to support identity and to unite us in emotional solidarity with others.

At this stage, formal operational thinking, with its new capacity for reflection on our own thought and ways of experiencing, invites us mentally to step outside the flow of life's stream and to analyze the process. From a vantage point on the river bank, we can take a look at the flow of the stream as a whole. We can see and name certain patterns of meaning arising out of our collection of stories. A myth or myths of the personal past can be composed; this represents a new level of story, a level we might call the story of our stories. And with this comes the possibility and burden of composing myths of possible futures.

Images and values embraced at this stage are largely unexamined. Meanings and values are valued and embraced, made part of our behaviors, but they have not been critically evaluated. That is the meanings and values of our life have not been examined to determine if they are integrated into a coherent and rational system which has internal consistency. In fact, any attempt to analyze the content of faith at this stage feels like a fundamental threat to the integrity of our identity and sense of selfhood.

In Stage 3 we most likely hold a philosophic view of reality which is not genuinely the result of an introspective process. Rather, it is expressed for the purpose of making us one with our community—or our perceived community. Faith at this stage is “synthetic” in that it is non-analytical; It develops as a result of choosing various meanings and values which exist in the social environment and which are implemented in the behaviors of significant persons in our social communities.

A discussion of values and convictions by a Stage 3 person is a means of asserting his solidarity with the community which he calls his own and from which he derives his social identity. This person does not discuss values in order to distinguish himself or to examine the values or to be sure that his views are correct. Rather, in such discussion he seeks to establish a sense of commonality or relatedness with significant other individuals or a significant community.

Factors contributing to the breakdown of Stage 3 and to readiness for transition may include: serious clashes or contradictions between valued authority sources; marked changes, by officially sanctioned leaders, or policies or practices previously deemed sacred and inviolable, or the encounter with experiences or perspectives that lead to critical reflection on how our beliefs and values have formed and changed, and on how “relative” they are to our particular group or background. Frequently the experience of leaving home precipitates the kind of examination of self, background, and life-guiding values which lead to stage transition at this point.

### **Crisis leading from Stage 3 to Stage 4:**

The ability to think critically and reflectively begins to challenge the accuracy of our perception of reality. A sense of assurance about our former world-view dissolves and is replaced by:

1. Tension between inherited beliefs and the need to be critically reflective about our ideas, ideals and values.
2. A need to replace inherited symbols and stories of the past with scientific and philosophical concepts and propositions which are believed to be more “objective”.
3. The need for internal integrity -- the meanings and values which shape our lives must reflect a coherent internal consistency.

## **Stage 4**

**Stage 4 Faith: The Reflective Faith of an Individual; Faith attitudes developed as a result of critical thinking about the elements of one’s beliefs** (Ages ~ Early Adulthood - Midlife; may be sustained through life) The emergent strength of this stage is the reflective construction of a personal ideology and the formation of a vocational dream with its imagined social identity.

### **Elements of Stage 4 Faith**

#### **Stage 4 Personal Values**

In this stage we are conscious of being an individual distinct from the group. A societal perspective on moral values begins to develop which is usually class-biased. There is an emerging sense of responsibility for personal commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes.

#### **Stage 4 Social Values**

In Stage 4 we construct a perspective genuinely aware of social systems and institutions. In addition to apprehending other persons in terms of their personal qualities, we also take into account the influences of their ideologies and the social experiences which have shaped their views. In Stage 4 we also achieve a working understanding of social relations in systems terms, no longer constructing social relations as merely the extension of interpersonal relations.

The ability to function relative to social systems seems to be the key to breaking through the third psychic circle. Just as the making of a moral choice indicates the presence of a personality ready to begin the process of developing interpersonal relationships, so does the ability to function consciously as a living part of a social system indicate potential for functioning consciously as a living part of the Supreme. This means that we have become capable of making moral choices which are simultaneously relative to the welfare of a social system as well as to the welfare of specific individuals comprising that

social system.

This is the point at which we are assigned a personal seraphic guardian of destiny. This seraphim will then work to guide us through the remaining circles, toward functional identity with the Supreme and true cosmic citizenship.

The movement from Stage 3 to Stage 4 is particularly critical for it is in this transition that the late adolescent or adult must begin to take seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes and address the issue of developing an autonomous selfhood while still functioning as part of a community.

This stage is marked by a double development. Previously sustained in our identity and faith by an interpersonal circle of significant others, we now claim an identity no longer defined by the composite of our roles or meanings to others. To sustain that new identity we compose a meaning frame conscious of its own boundaries and inner connections and aware of itself as a “world view.” But at this stage we are still not likely to attend to the unconscious factors influencing our judgments and behaviors.

The locus of authority becomes our own internal judgment as informed by an ideological perspective. Authorities and norms must be congruent with this in order to be accepted as valid.

Many people complete only half of the transition to Stage 4. By virtue of college experience, travel or of being moved from one community to another, many persons come face-to-face with the relativity of their perspectives, and those of others, to their life experience. But they fail to interrupt their reliance on external sources of authority—and may even strengthen their reliance upon them—in order to cope with this relativity.

#### **Stage 4 Supportive Stories**

Rational thinking dominates; symbols and stories which were meaningful in earlier stages are consciously rejected but continue to operate unconsciously.

#### **Stage 4 Faith Experience**

Perhaps more so than in any other stage transition, the transition between Stage 3 and Stage 4 activates the processes of courage, doubt and risk-taking which we discussed earlier. Because this stage focuses so completely on rational thought, comparisons of meanings become more easily possible. Faith is placed in the world of scientific and philosophic concepts. The determining orientation of faith becomes the assumption that rational thought can discover the truths of ultimate reality.

Inherited beliefs and stories are replaced with stories and symbols of the scientific and philosophical world.

For some adults, the transition to Stage 4, if it happens at all, occurs in the thirties or forties. It can be precipitated by changes in primary relationships such as divorce, the

death of a parent or children growing up and leaving home. Or it can result from the challenges of moving, changing jobs, tumultuous social or political changes, or the experience of the breakdown or inadequacy of our previous faith position.

For those who have previously enjoyed an unquestioning relationship to God and to their fellow worshippers through a set of religious symbols, this translation of the meanings and values of religious symbols into the elements of rational thought can bring a sense of loss, dislocation, grief and even guilt. Of necessity, if we are to make this transition, we must grapple with doubt and we must have the courage to take the risk of moving forward to wherever the unflinching quest for truth might take us.

Review: 160:1.8

Stage 4's strength has to do with its capacity for critical evaluation. But there is danger in this strength. An excessive confidence in the conscious mind and in critical thought can create excessive self-confidence. There is usually passionate attachment to these individually constructed philosophical or metaphysical images – just as passionate as the fundamentalist belief in a particular story.

The transition to Stage 4 represents a significant upheaval in our life and may consume as many as five or seven years or longer. It is much less severe if it happens during young adulthood as a natural accompaniment of leaving home and the construction of one's first adult life structures. When this transition occurs in later adulthood, it is much more traumatic because of its impact upon the more established and developed system of relationships and social roles which constitute an adult life structure.

#### **Stage 4 Faith Challenges**

The task of this stage is the construction of an individual world view based on critical, reflective thought.

#### **Crisis leading from Stage 4 to Stage 5:**

*Crisis in Belief:* There is a realization that the “objective” world view constructed during Stage 4 is not able to provide meanings and values which are useful in understanding the greater depths of experience which may be encountered in the later life of a mature thinker. This dissatisfaction leads to gradual or abrupt feelings of sterility and disillusionment, precipitating the well-known “mid-life crisis.” Symptoms of this crisis may include mental depression and/or physical illness.

*Crisis in Trust:* Traumatic life experiences such as illness, death, divorce, etc., may shatter one's former trust in God, in people and in one's self. Formerly trusted perceptions of reality, including our past understandings of God's intervention in human affairs, no longer provide help or hope in the face of powerlessness, disenchantment, and/or in the face of radical evil and suffering.

Somewhere in the transition between stage 4 and stage 5 it may be reasonable to

assume entrance into the third psychic circle.

## **Stage 5**

**Stage 5 Faith: Integrative/Expanding Faith; Faith attitudes which attempt to reach beyond the integrated unconscious processes and the intellectual constructs of the self** (Ages ~ Mid-Life and beyond – unusual before mid-life) Stage 5 knows the sacrament of defeat and the reality of irrevocable commitments and acts. Its emergent strength is the ability to live with paradox and to develop a sense of responsibility for the world which spans beyond the attainables of one's lifetime.

### **Elements of Stage 5 Faith**

#### **Stage 5 Personal Values**

Stage 5 involves going beyond the consciously developed systems and clear boundaries of Stage 4 to include our unconscious processes. In this stage we must come to terms with the fact that the conscious ego is not master in its own house. Stage 5 understands that the content of faith, as well as the symbols and stories used to understand and share faith, are all shaped by unconscious processes.

The disrupting trends of our unconscious processes are one of the great problems of all personal life. If we fail to establish a uniting center of values, relative to which we attempt to organize all of the processes of our inner lives—including our unconscious needs and desires—the result can be a deterioration of the mortal sense of self.

Moral judgment in this stage 5 reaches beyond the interests of the self and seeks higher principles which are universal in nature.

There is a deepened sense of self as both individual and an integral part of the human community. There is a recognition of oneself as paradox; both gifted and flawed, strong and weak. There may be a revival and expansion of earlier perceptions of the self as defined by a role played in a mythological story.

#### **Stage 5 Social Values**

The boundary of social consciousness now extends beyond class interests and seeks to become more universal in nature. There is a deepened interest in the values of groups, classes and traditions other than our own.

An internal locus of authority continues to evolve. There is an integration of our judgments and experiences with reflection on claims made by others and of various expressions of cumulative human wisdom. We begin to function in more consciously effective liaison with the Adjuster in the choosing of the values relative to which we

make our decisions.

Symbolic thinking regains equal value with critical and reflective thinking. Old symbols acquire a new richness of meaning and value. There is a growing recognition that all “knowing” is metaphoric; there is a readiness for participation in the reality expressed in symbol and myth.

The tasks of this stage are:

1. The recognition and acceptance of life as having contradictory or inconsistent qualities.
2. A reworking of the image of self and world integrating symbol, story and scientific/philosophic understanding.
3. An understanding that “truth” is found within numerous stories and interpretations, not exclusively within one’s own.
4. A claiming and reworking of the meaning and value of one’s own life, past and present.

Our world view becomes that of the universe as a living organism of which the self is a living, contributing part. This is not merely an intellectual assent to an idea. Rather does this concept of the universe as a living organism become the central point of value relative to which we choose the moral and spiritual values which are implemented into our behaviors and decision-making processes.

### **Stage 5 Supportive Stories**

At Stage 5, self-selected supportive stories provide symbolic representations of the infinite. There is an openness to meanings and values which might be derived from other stories. There is a recognition that the purpose of stories is to facilitate the choosing of higher meanings and values rather than to authoritatively represent actual reality.

### **Stage 5 Faith Experience**

In the domain of faith there is an increasing effort to live relative to one’s best understanding of God’s purposes. There is a sense that we are participants in a created, ordered universe; that the Creator is ultimately in control; that our existence contains meaning and our actions can be of value in the universe.

Belief at this stage includes a realization and acceptance of the fact that all human ideas and understandings are fallible and destined to change. There is an understanding that God alone is infallible and changeless. A genuine openness to the truths of traditions and communities other than one’s own appears.

## Stage 5 Faith Challenges

Stage 4 is satisfied with an “either/or”, “black and white” view of reality in which concepts are well-defined by rigorous logical thinking. Stage 5 sees both (or the many) sides of an issue simultaneously and suspects that things are organically related to each other.

Review 101:1.4, 1002:6

Stage 5 understands that truth is more multidimensional and organically interdependent than most theories or accounts of truth can grasp. Stage 5 also sees that the relativity of religious traditions which matters is not their relativity to each other, but *their relativity to the reality to which they mediate relationship*. Stage 5's radical openness to the truth of other traditions is not mere tolerance; it stems from the awareness that the reality of the infinite is greater than any medium of expression.

The new strength of this stage comes in the rise of the ironic imagination—a capacity to fully accept the most powerful meanings of our personal experience or of our social group, while simultaneously recognizing that these values are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality. The danger of this stage lies in the direction of a paralyzing passivity or inaction, giving rise to complacency or cynical withdrawal, due to its paradoxical understanding of truth.

Review 103:7.7

Stage 5 involves a critical recognition of our social unconscious—the myths, ideal images and prejudices built deeply into the self-system by virtue of our nurture within a particular social class, religious tradition, ethnic group or the like.

### Crisis leading from Stage 5 to Stage 6:

The crisis leading to Stage 6 is the recognition that loyalty to emerging new meanings and values may require sacrifice—of our lifestyle, social position, or in some cases, of life itself.

## Stage 6

**Stage 6 Faith: Universalizing Faith: Faith attitudes of a personality consciously integrated with the Supreme** (Ages: Mid-life and beyond; very few persons achieve this level of living faith maturity due to its self-transcending nature.) Here we begin to participate in “the faith of Jesus.” This is the level of the first psychic circle.

Review Paper 196

### Elements of Stage 6 Faith

## **Stage 6 Personal Values**

In Stage 6 the center of value is the evolving Supreme Being. All moral values are calculated relative to this central reality and an attempt is made to understand the will of God as a critical determiner of value choices. The self and all others are regarded as children of God.

## **Stage 6 Social Values**

This stage sees the emergence of universal ethical principles. The boundaries of social consciousness are expanded to include personal identification with an evolving universe of personality relationships.

Not only does Stage 6 understand its relationship to the Supreme, the stage 6 individual's life is dominated by motives deriving from this insight. Stage 6 understands the nature of one's participation in an inclusive commonwealth of being. While stage 5 acts out of loyalty to the present order, to its institutions, groups, and compromise procedures, stage 6 involves becoming an activist incarnation of the imperatives of the great commandment which Jesus gave us—that we love one another as he loved us.

The locus of authority is centered on personal judgment informed by the experiences and truths of previous stages, purified of egoistic striving, and linked by disciplined intuition to the principle of being and to the purposes of a transcendent power.

The world is understood as a living part of a universal spiritual creation of a divinely integrated intelligence.

## **Stage 6 Supportive Stories**

Personal and social identity at Stage 6 is experienced as relationship to the Supreme. It transcends forms of social identity projected from roles in metaphysical stories which supported faith in earlier stages. Stories may be used to symbolize various truths but the individual is likely to draw upon a larger pool of stories instead of relying on a single story.

## **Stage 6 Faith Experience**

Stage 6 faith is faith in God and in God's purposes; the dedication of our will to the doing of the will of God to the best of our understanding.

In stage 6, beliefs about God become less important than our personal experience of God as active and present in our life and in the world, and in the integration of our purposes and will with the will of God.

## **Stage 6 Faith Challenges**

The tasks of this stage are:

1. Devotion to doing the will of God, as it is best understood.
2. Living a life of service—to both friends and enemies.
3. Non-resistance to evil
4. Living out, through faith, the highest interpretation of the Golden Rule—learning to love one another as Jesus loved us.

Stage 6 is exceedingly rare. The persons best described by it live consciously in an ultimate environment which is inclusive of all being. They have become incarnations and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community. They are powerful in the sense that they create zones of liberation from the social, political, economic and ideological shackles we place and tolerate on human life. Through their decisions and actions they help humanity to experientially know the meaning of living in the presence of God.

Review 100:2.2

Beyond paradox and polarities, persons in this stage are grounded in a oneness with the Supreme. Their visions and commitments free them for a passionate yet detached spending of the self in love, devoted to overcoming division, oppression, and violence, and in effective anticipatory response to a universal commonwealth of love and justice.

Review 180:5.4

### **Getting Through the Stages**

How do we go about traversing these stages of growth? These stages should not be viewed as levels of achievement, but rather descriptions of stages we will encounter in a natural, evolutionary process. Our efforts should be directed toward the tasks of the stage in which we find ourselves, rather than an effort to force a transition to the next stage.

In our efforts to traverse the psychic circles, we might ask, "What is it that retards our growth and prevents us from moving into the next higher circle?" The answer is "fear." It is fear, *The Urantia Book* tells us, which is the opposite of faith. We are told that one of the great tasks of mortal life is to transmute the fear inherited from our evolutionary origins into the faith of our spiritual heritage.

It is fear which keeps us from progressing -- most often a fear that critical evaluation of our beliefs and assumptions might expose illusions which we have found comforting and upon which we have come to depend for identity. One of the greatest betrayals of spiritual integrity in which we might engage is to use the concept of "faith" as an excuse to avoid critical evaluation. "Unreasoned fear is a master intellectual fraud practiced upon the evolving mortal soul."

The boundary between our present circle of attainment and the next circle may be viewed as the boundary between our faith and our fear; the boundary represents unconquered fear and doubt.

For example, in the seventh circle when the ascender's social consciousness is based on the immediate family and the family's community, it is fear and uncertainty regarding personal relationships outside this boundary which keeps the ascender confined to this circle.

When this fear is transmuted into faith, the ascender's social boundaries expand and it is possible to move into the next higher circle. This higher circle, in turn, has a boundary of fear which must be conquered before additional progress may be made. Thus it is a process of transmuting fear into faith which enables us to traverse these circles and eventually become comfortable functioning as a cosmic citizen. As we progress through the circles, emotional fear gradually becomes replaced with intellectual uncertainty but doubt may remain as a significant factor.

“Uncertainty with security is the essence of the Paradise adventure.”

The admonitions to spiritual growth which we find in The Urantia Book are able to catalyze every stage and will faithfully guide us on our path.

These admonitions for growth are:

1. The continual seeking of the Father's will.
2. Worship – evolving friendship with God.
3. Service – the unselfish service of our fellows.
4. The unending quest for truth and a willingness to go wherever it might lead.

One of the beauties of the teachings of Jesus is that if we simply follow his great commandment, which leads to worship and service, we will find ourselves progressing in a natural manner. Jesus was not an administrator who came to give us rules and regulations, he is our creator and he came to tell us how to live progressively and meaningfully within the universe which he is creating.

Review 160:1.8, 110:6.4

These factors, if embraced, can lead us through these stages of growth. Not only do they lead from one stage to another, but they provide for a full realization of the potentials within each stage. Jesus commented to John that he must have “. . . faith in the effectiveness of the supreme human desire to do the will of God—to be like God.”

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it is important to appreciate that we are not engaged in the faith adventure alone. God is seeking to find us and to commune with us.

Review 131:10.4, 155:6.18

May the Father in Heaven bless each of us with the challenges and difficulties which will lead us into a fuller actualization of our heritage as cosmic citizens and guide us as we faithfully traverse those rugged hills of moral choosing and spiritual progress .

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Distribution of Stages of Faith by Age in the Research Sample

Research of Dr. James Fowler

(Stages with two numbers such as 5-6 indicate persons in transition between the two stages.)

Stage	0-6	7-12	13-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
6								1.6 %
5-6								
5					14.6 %	12.5 %	23.5 %	16.1 %
4-5				3.3 %	18.8 %	21.9 %	5.9 %	14.5 %
4			5.4 %	40.0 %	20.8 %	56.2 %	29.4 %	27.4 %
3-4			28.6 %	33.3 %	8.3 %			14.5 %
3			50.0 %	17.8 %	37.5 %	9.4 %	35.3 %	24.2 %
2-3		17.2 %	12.5 %	4.4 %				1.6 %
2		72.4 %	3.6 %	1.1 %			5.9 %	
1-2	12.0 %	6.9 %						
1	88.0 %	3.4 %						

Suggested reading:

Fowler, James W., Stages of Faith, Harper: San Francisco, 1981

Jung, C. G., The Undiscovered Self, Penguin: New York, 1958

Kuhn, Thomas, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, University of Chicago Press: 1962

Tillich, Paul, Dynamics of Faith, Harper: New York, 1958

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**Some Additional Notes**

In the adolescent phase of infatuated love of God, the psychological experience of the love of God is heavily influenced by projections, needs and desires of the unconscious. In later stages, this love matures and is more analogous to the love of a mature marriage, where there is a much deeper affection based on shared experiences and understanding derived over a long period of time.

There is a stage in which faith is afraid of rational evaluation of unconscious factors because of the fear that looking at them will destroy the quality of faith which one has come to enjoy. The fear of the destruction is real and valid. But the quality of faith which will replace the more immature level of attainment will be much richer and deeper, and far more meaningful.

One must be careful at the stage of really opening up to spirit because this is in reality an opening up to unconscious levels of reality. This demands more rational work to be sure that unconscious needs and desires are not modulating the new levels of spirit being contacted. If this is not tended to, unconscious needs and desires and projections will capture the spirit consciousness and bend it toward the meeting the needs of the self.