

Initiation

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Being the first of a series of two articles which will constitute the opening chapters of the book "THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF INITIATION," to be issued early in the Fall.

The point has been raised as to just what the word "Initiation" has come to mean in the mind of the present-day seeker after truth. By the latter I mean, of course, the un-initiate properly speaking, since once Initiation has been consciously experienced, little doubt remains as to its nature.

But there are different degrees of Initiation and there are many who, having experienced some form or degree of it, still fail to understand, or even begin to grasp, what the higher meaning of the word implies. In one sense the different kinds of Initiation represent the different Degrees or Grades since the word itself means a Beginning.

The important thing is to realize that we must be prepared to begin all over again, many times; for every step is both a Birth and a Death.

Here we have one of the great keys to the study of the subject. One man may feel that he has undergone initiation, many have actually passed through some ceremony called by that name, while another, a little further advanced perhaps, may realize that his Brother is deceiving himself in the thought that he has thereby become an Initiate. Probably what he most needs is to make a fresh start, to begin again, before he can advance farther. Conversely, as long as he is under the illusion that he has reached a certain Degree—perhaps the last degree he is just as much blind-folded and unable to see the Way as he was, when, as an aspirant to the First Degree, he was "duly and truly prepared" and led by the hand of another, whose presence he felt but whom he may never have seen, out of the darkness of the beginning into the glimmering light of the first stage towards Mastery.

But was he *duly and truly prepared*? That is a point needing further consideration.

The subject just entered upon is one that will require a great deal of elucidation in order to deal with it fully. All that can be hoped for in this brief essay is a slight outline, and a few

hints that may lead the true seeker to further discoveries, and I trust, some actual experiences of his own. But as long as it has the effect of removing a few of the veils which hide man from the Light, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

It should first be understood that there are ceremonies of initiation which fail to Initiate. This accounts for much of the confusion in the minds of some people. There are also experiences of a highly illuminating and informing nature, that are not strictly speaking to be considered as Initiatory in character. Many people, who have experienced quite interesting and important psychic and even higher states, make the mistake of supposing that this confers some Degree of Initiation. This is perhaps a greater cause of confusion, since it is of a more subtle nature and not so obvious as the former case.

The fact that the people were not *duly and truly prepared* either by their Initiators or by themselves, probably accounts for the majority of the failures above mentioned.

Again, an Order whose business it is to initiate people into the Mysteries, may succeed in doing so for a time, the Ritual itself being good, yet fail later on, owing to the True Current from the Higher Powers being definitely withdrawn. Here we should pause and thoughtfully give heed.

On the other hand, a person having no conscious knowledge that he is linked to any Order, may receive experiences of a distinctly Initiatory character, and thereby discover that for many years he has been linked to a Chain, the invisible bonds of which have drawn him into the true Fellowship in a subtle and most remarkable manner. Such a one most probably devoted all his attention to *proper preparation* in order that he might become fit for service, while seeking no reward for himself, and thus found, without conscious effort, that the Crown has been awarded to him.

But, after all, Initiation is a Beginning and he will do well if he mistakes it not for the End, thus cutting himself off from true Advancement.

It may well be if we confine our attention to more concrete instances. Let us first glance at some of the outer forms connected with the subject.

Initiation is properly associated with some kind of Order or Brotherhood. We find around us many Fraternal Societies which, holding some "secret knowledge" in common, purport to initiate those who are candidates for admission into their midst. The real bond of such societies is based upon the idea that any *special experience held in common with others*, but not discussed with those outside that limited circle, has the tendency to form a definite tie which holds the Society together.

In a larger sense the common ties of Brotherhood, caused by the Special Experiences in which all humanity, and even the lower animals share, forms the basis for true Societies of this sort. Birth, Life and Death are experiences through which we all must pass, whether we will or not, and they form fitting Subjects for the first Three Degrees of any Order.

Sometimes this basis is plain in the Rituals, sometimes they bear little trace of these fundamental ideas.

But there are experiences of which Man is capable, of which the animals and lower types of human beings are not, and these naturally and necessarily form the basis of Higher Degrees which tend to hold together for common purposes those who have already had such experiences, and those to whom they are possible of transmission. These, however, after a certain stage, are found to deal with the Mysteries of Birth, Life and Death in some higher or wider sense and form. The Link between these Grades is, or should be, some knowledge of God, whereby Man may learn his right relation with the Great Initiator, the *Beginning* of all Things.

Direct *experience* of God is not shared by all humanity, but it forms the closest tie and Bond of Brotherhood among those who have attained to it. It is an experience that cannot be transmitted unless the candidate is *Truly and Duly Prepared*, and not alone the Candidate, but the Officers of the Lodge; for they must be Open Channels of the True Light.

That is why some exterior organizations have become little more than a farce, for even if they purport to deal with the Mysteries of Birth, Life and Death, how can they *Initiate* into these *Mysteries* if they know nothing of their *Beginnings*.

I do not wish to discount the possible value of external Societies, but merely to point out that in most instances their work is Symbolical only, and represents but the veil of true initiation.

Many of my readers may have passed through some such outer show of Initiation. Few will have grasped the inner meaning of that through which they passed. Many earnest seekers may have travelled this way with a true desire for the Light, some, will undoubtedly have experienced a certain disappointment.

Many have been asked the question "From whence came you?" and have been taught to make a glib reply. But, my reader, let me ask again "*From whence came you?*" Can you reply without prompting? If not you had better seek Initiation in the BEGINNING, and having found the Source from whence you came, make a fresh start as a real Initiate, with true Initiative. But when you come back to this old Lodge—the World—

you are very likely to *meet with resistance* though you may afterwards gain admission if you can display the true tokens and pronounce the True Word.

It is difficult to see this world in true perspective, such is the weakness of our sight, and such the complexity of the structure. But the Plan is still on the Trestle-board of the Great Architect, the Initiate has studied it, at least the particular part of it which it is his duty to carry out, and having seen that Plan, he is able to consciously cooperate towards the completion of this House not made with hands, to build a Living Temple of his own Body that shall be like unto the plan of that Greater Temple the Body of Humanity.

But, you may tell me, the Word has been Lost. To which I can only reply: The Word has not been lost except to those who are willing to accept a substitute, any substitute, so long as they themselves can avoid the penalty. How many of you believing the Master to possess the True Word would be prepared to receive the blow from a "Real Maul" instead of a substituted one? But you cannot avoid the "True Maul" by such a simple device, Death comes to all who have not wrestled from Him the True Word whereby we triumph over Him.

What is the True Word? Obviously I should not tell you, even if I knew. But I will tell you this that Initiation will bring you at least the INITIAL letter of the True Word of your Own Being. The Other may be the Initial Word of the Great Book, and your Word may be but one of the Words therein, but for YOU it is of vital importance, for it is the Word whereby you may triumph over Death. Only the true Master of the Lodge knows it, only He can whisper it in your ear, and engrave it on the White Stone. No other may know it but yourself, for it is the One Secret of Your Being. Every Brother's Word is different, but the knowledge of It will enable him to discover many points of fellowship, hitherto undreamed of.

Enough of reference to this aspect of the subject, for few Masters there be who can transmit the right Word to the right Candidate, therefore Initiation is not to be obtained in every Lodge.

The fact that there is an exterior Order still preserving and using the original Word of the "Third Degree" in its general sense, does not matter very much in the present instance; for those who seek admission must be prepared to meet with resistance. This they may not like, little realizing that only through the opposition of forces is the structure held together.

Now a few words may be said on the subject of Orders or Societies purporting to confer Higher Degrees.

There are Higher Degrees, but generally speaking it is the lower ones, the mysteries of Birth, Life, and Death that the Candidate most needs to understand. Without a proper Foundation the Temple will not long stand. It is not very wise to look upon the "House not made with hands" as composed of "hot air"; although there is something to be said for those who remark that the Word must have been the result of the Divine Breath. But don't breathe a word of it unless you are quite sure what you are talking about. The Fourth Power of the Sphinx in Silence.

Now to direct our attention to a more serious manifestation of the Great Order, still working in the Outer. Somewhere we may read:

In the Name of the Initiator, Amen.

1. In the beginning was Initiation. The flesh profiteth nothing; the mind profiteth nothing; that which is unknown to you and above these, while firmly based upon their equilibrium, giveth life.

2. In all systems of religion is to be found a system of Initiation, which may be defined as the process by which a man comes to learn that unknown Crown.

3. Though none can communicate the knowledge or the power to achieve this, which we may call the Great Work, it is yet possible for initiates to guide others.

4. Every man must overcome his own obstacles, expose his own illusions. Yet others may assist him to do both, and they may enable him altogether to avoid many of the false paths, leading no whither, which tempt the weary feet of the uninitiated pilgrim. They can further insure that he is duly tried and tested, for there are many who think themselves to be Masters who have not even begun to tread the Way of Service that leads thereto.

5. Now the Great Work is one, and the Initiation is one, and the Reward is one, however diverse are the symbols wherein the unutterable is clothed.

And again, in another place:

0. Learn first—Oh thou who aspiest unto our ancient Order!—that Equilibrium is the basis of the Work. If thou thyself hast not a sure foundation, whereon wilt thou stand to direct the forces of Nature?

1. Know then, that as man is born into this world amidst the Darkness of Matter, and the strife of contending forces; so must his first endeavour be to seek the Light through their reconciliation.

2. Thou then, who hast trials and troubles, rejoice because of them, for in them is Strength, and by their means is a path-way opened unto that Light.

Here we get a glimpse of the symbolic meaning of the darkness and the trials and troubles of the "lodge room," but how many of us appreciate the value of the trials and troubles of this World Lodge, in which we are all being Initiated by the Great Hierarchy? Or, shall I say, Duly and Truly Prepared for Initiation? Our Record is pretty carefully looked up, and not unless we are worthy and well qualified, do we consciously enter the Great Lodge, much less advance, or obtain the power to raise the fallen; be it ourself or another.

Few even realize the existence of the Great Hierarchy, Who, having a full Knowledge of the World Order, and of the Higher Orders, consciously order the world aright.

Few even take into consideration the "Circumambulation" of this Planet as it is rushed blindly on its course round the sun, one of the Greater Lights of the Lodge; and how He in turn with all His Officers, wheels in Grander and Wider Circles round the Centre upon which we have been taught to seek it.

Day by Day men are born, live and die, unconscious of the movements of the great Lodge. Thinking, perhaps, that they are standing still, when all is change, which is Life, while they alone remain stagnant, which is death.

Few indeed consider the possibility of a *dimension at right-angles* to every known dimension of space, and beyond that others, to infinity.

Few indeed think of two infinities, the Infinitely Small, as well as the Infinitely Great; and aiming at the *former* the infinitely minute and un-extended Point of Light at the Centre of their own Being (which Centre is everywhere since the Circumference is nowhere) take the advice of our Ancient Brethren who plainly told us to "Seek it on the Centre."

Few realize that Life is the substance of Light, and that the Great Light is to be found inherent in the Substance, Spirit in Matter, ever united in the bond of Love. Few realize that the Spirit is of its own nature free, and will lead us (invisibly) out of the Darkness into the Light.

Few realize that that silly old friend who has often given us good advice in a joking way, without intruding himself on us too much, never interfering with our true will, but whom we rather despise on account of his age and shabby appearance, may perhaps be the Tyler of the Great Lodge; quite able to admit us as soon as we are duly and truly prepared to meet with a little resistance for our own true good. Fewer still realize that the

old fellow is probably a Past Master of the Game of Life, one who even prefers to sit outside the door enjoying the fun of watching those who are covered with decorations, yet still seeking INITIATION.

To be Concluded.