

Dr Larry Culliford – (<http://www ldc52.co.uk>) a UK psychiatrist adds depth to our understanding of these stages in his book, *The Psychology of Spirituality: an Introduction*.

What is called the **Faithful level** on this site, Culliford calls the Conformist Stage in some of his writings. More poetically in his book he has named it "Belonging" because at this level, being part of a group takes precedence over individuality. This stage is characterized by an "us versus them" mentality where fear of "the other" (everyone who has different beliefs, different customs or a different lifestyle) is a strong motivating factor. Growing past this stage is an important step in becoming fully adult and fully whole as a human being.

What this site calls the **Rational stage**, Culliford calls "Searching" in his book and the Individual Stage elsewhere. Here the individual is willing to question the givens handed to him by his tribe and may break out of the tribe if reason tells him this is necessary. A key skill, according to Culliford, that allows a person to access this stage is being able to accept life's inevitable threats and losses with equanimity. People who do not successfully move beyond the Conformist stage to the Individual stage may suffer "identity confusion," risk mental illness and may become a burden on society.

What this site calls the **Mystic level**, Culliford calls "Homecoming" in his book and the Integration stage elsewhere. Here the person learns to leave prior "narrow certainty" (either/or mentality) behind, embracing instead a broader perspective, a "both/and" understanding. Here the person sees past the distinctions he found so important in the prior stages and moves toward unity with all people, and in some cases with everything in the universe.

Culliford is in favor of exposing these stages to the public because "understanding the mechanism helps the developmental process of transformation.*" Read on!

* Culliford, Larry. *The Psychology of Spirituality: an Introduction*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 2011. 149.

2018 update: See also: Dr. Culliford's *Seeking Wisdom: A Spiritual Manifesto*. University of Buckingham Press, 2018.