

THE FAMILY: Cornerstone of Civilization

By Bob Slagle

Where do we look for the ideal model of family and parenting? Twentieth century secular literature is burdened with normative data describing what does and does not work for children's stability and for enduring marriages. The popular literature is rife with how-to books and scores of opinions by doctors and therapists. Yet, the family as a "cornerstone" unit seems to be degrading at the present time in history. Divorce is up sharply, child abuse is ubiquitous, children are in pain, and our collective loyalty to child culture is nil (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1989; O'Toole, 1991). John Bradshaw says families are dysfunctional and parents are engaged in the soul murder of their children. He says that parents are unconsciously passing on a deeply shaming, abusive, and poisonous pedagogy in a multigenerational process, that goes on and on (Bradshaw, 1979, 1989, 1990). Urie Bronfenbrenner states, "In today's world parents find themselves at the mercy of a society which imposes pressures and priorities that allow neither time nor place for meaningful activities and relations between children and adults, which downgrades the role of parents and the functions of parenthood..." (Bronfenbrenner, 1976).

We appear to be at a turning point in history when make-shifts and compromises no longer work. Deep spiritual renovation must take place. "During the psychologically unsettled times of the twentieth century, amid the economic upheavals, the moral crosscurrents, and the sociologic rip tides of the cyclonic transitions of a scientific era, thousands upon thousands of men and women have become humanly dislocated; they are anxious, restless, fearful, uncertain, and unsettled; as never before in the world's history they need the consolation and stabilization of sound religion. In the face of unprecedented scientific achievement and mechanical development there is spiritual stagnation and philosophic chaos" (UB 1090:2).

The end of the twentieth century appears to be a time when strength for the family as cornerstone of civilization must come from the top down, must be sought on spiritual levels first and then manifested in earthly life. In a recent study, Lauer and Lauer studied 300 happily married couples who had been married for 15 years or more. One of the most significant variables contributing to a successful marriage is the belief in family and marriage as a long-term commitment to something sacred (Lauer & Lauer, 1989). In another study, 40 years of research has shown a strong relationship between religion and family happiness. "There are indications that this religious quality went deeper than going to church or participating in religious activities together. It could most appropriately be called a commitment to a spiritual life style. Words are inadequate to communicate this, but what many of these families said was that they had an awareness of God or a higher power that gave them a sense of purpose and gave their family a sense of support and strength" (Stinnett, 1989).

THE CALL TO FAMILY and FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

A preponderance of psychological literature points to early family life as the source of many of the enduring woes and blessings of adulthood. In his article, "Caring Kids," Alfie Kohn concludes after much investigation, that professionals in the field of education and child development agree that moral values should be taught in the home (Kohn, 1991). In Jesus' talk with John Mark on Wednesday, the day of rest, he emphasizes that the first eight years enormously influence our after-life throughout all eternity (UB 1922:4). The acknowledgment and accreditation given to "family" in *The Urantia Book* nearly exhausts our human concepts for relevance and importance:

"... the family is the master civilizer" (UB 913:2). "The family occupied the very center of Jesus' philosophy of life—here and hereafter" (UB 1581:1). "Almost everything of lasting value has its roots in the family" (UB 765:5). "...the home...civilization's only hope of survival..." (UB 943:2). "...first successful peace group..." (UB 765:5). "The most effective of all social groups is the

family..." (UB 1775:6). "...man's greatest purely human achievement..." (UB 939:3). "Family life is the progenitor of true morality..." (UB 942:2). "...family life...worth any price, any sacrifice..." (UB 1776:1).

The privilege of rearing cosmic citizens, children of eternal destiny, should be enough to inspire any human being to the family experience. "No surviving mortal, midwayer, or seraphim may ascend to Paradise, attain the Father, and be mustered into the Corps of the Finality without having passed through that sublime experience of achieving parental relationship to an evolving child of the worlds or some other experience analogous and equivalent thereto. The relationship of child and parent is fundamental to the essential concept of the Universal Father and his universe children. Therefore does such an experience become indispensable to the experiential training of all ascenders" (UB 516:3). And, "...parental experience is essential, the idea of procreating cosmic citizens, the enlarged understanding of the privilege of procreation—giving sons to the Father" (UB 939:6). "The creation of new pictures out of old facts, the restatement of parental life in the lives of

offspring—these are the artistic triumphs of truth” (UB 555:2). On one of his visits to Philadelphia, Jesus said, “This same Father has directed the creation of male and female, and it is the divine will that men and women should find their highest service and consequent joy in the establishment of homes for the reception and training of children, in the creation of whom these parents become copartners with the Makers of heaven and earth” (UB 1839:5).

While the human family does not survive death, having a family may contribute to individual survival, because of the values, habits, self-maintenance, and gratifications that are fostered in family life. “Love of offspring is almost universal and is of distinct survival value.... The animals love their children; man—civilized man—loves his children’s children” (UB 940:4). Participation in family contributes mightily to social and personal progress. “Pair marriage favors and fosters that intimate understanding and effective co-operation which is best for parental happiness, child welfare, and social efficiency” (UB 928:1-2). The same authoress, a primary supernaphim, characterizes the home as, “...civilization’s most useful and sublime institution...” (UB 931:1); and later says, “The family is vitally linked to the mechanism of self-maintenance; it is the sole hope of race perpetuation under the mores of civilization, while at the same time it most effectively provides certain highly satisfactory forms of self-gratification” (UB 939:3).

The family is nearly all-important to the child. “The family represents to the young child all that he can first know of either human or divine relationships. The child must derive his first impressions of the universe from the mother’s care; he is wholly dependent on the earthly father for his first ideas of the heavenly Father” (UB 1922:4). The importance of family life is certainly not unique to our planet. The people of a continental nation on a neighboring planet, “...regard the home as the basic institution of their civilization. It is expected that the most valuable part of a child’s education and character training will be secured from his parents and at home, and fathers devote almost as much attention to child culture as do mothers” (UB 811:14).

No commentary on family would be complete without mention of the family’s contribution to true brotherhood. “Marriage, with children and consequent family life, is stimulative of the highest potentials in human nature and simultaneously provides the ideal avenue for the expression of those quickened attributes of mortal personality. The family provides for the biologic perpetuation of the human species. The home is the natural arena wherein the ethics of blood brotherhood may be grasped by the growing children. The family is the fundamental unit of fraternity in which parents and children learn these lessons of patience, altruism, tolerance, and forbearance which are so essential to the realization of brotherhood among all men” (UB 941:6). So, the family is the arena for practicing brotherhood with one’s own siblings. These fraternal feelings and attitudes may eventually be generalized to include all mankind, even all intelligent celestial life.

“Family life is the progenitor of true morality, the ancestor of the consciousness of loyalty to duty. The enforced associations of family life stabilize personality and stimulate its growth through the compulsion of necessitous adjustment to other and diverse personalities. But even more, a true family—a good family—reveals to the parental procreators the attitude of the Creator to his children, while at the same time such true parents portray to their children the first of a long series of ascending disclosures of the love of the Paradise parent of all universe children” (UB 942:2).

Michael’s dedication to his earthly brothers and sisters of Joseph’s family should inspire any prospective parent. Jesus served as father to his earthly family for almost a score of years (UB 1389:5). “The family occupied the very center of Jesus’ philosophy of life—here and hereafter. He based his teaching about God on the family, while he sought to correct the Jewish tendency to over-honor ancestors. He exalted family life as the highest human duty...” (UB 1581:1). Jesus’ dedication to his family was constantly being manifested. “Jesus rightly reasoned that the watch-care of his earthly father’s family must take precedence of all duties; that the support of his family must become his first obligation” (UB 1389:8-1390:1). “He continued, right up to the event of his baptism, to contribute to the family finances and to take a keen personal interest in the spiritual welfare of every one of his brothers and sisters” (UB 1419:1). “And the rigorous experience of supporting his family was a sure safeguard against his having overmuch time for idle meditation or the indulgence of mystic tendencies” (UB 1393:6).

The family supports true religion. “The love life of a wise home and the loyal devotion of true religion exert a profound reciprocal influence upon each other. Such a home life enhances religion, and genuine religion always glorifies the home” (UB 1922:5).

FAMILY MEETINGS (FAMILY COUNCIL PRACTICES)

The Chief of Seraphim of our planet states in the section on “Marriage and Family Life,” “Human society would be greatly improved if the civilized races would more generally return to the family-council practices of the Andites” (UB 941:7). Who would not like to see society “greatly improved”? This statement is made all the more profound when we realize that the Andites were themselves super-human, being the progeny of the Adamites and the Nodites (UB 871:8, 892:6). The authoress of this statement is among the highest of the angels, a Primary Supernaphim from Paradise (UB414:5).

This Primary Supernaphim further qualifies the nature of these family-council practices by saying, “They did not maintain the patriarchal or autocratic form of family government. They were very brotherly and associative, freely and frankly discussing every proposal and regulation of a family nature” (UB 941:7). This non-authoritarian and perhaps “Anditean” type of Family Meeting is portrayed by

the Adlerian psychoanalyst, Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D., (Dreikurs, Gould & Corsini, 1974), and in my *Family Meeting Handbook*, (Slagle, 1985). In these democratic family councils, each family member has equal voting power and unanimous or consensual agreements are made. "Fairness" seems to be a key word and an important cornerstone of Family Meetings and finds support in human research literature as well as in *The Urantia Book* (e.g. UB 1401). In a study by Melanie Killen, 64 children (ages 6-12) were presented with stories and asked for their moral judgments and explanations. When a child found something in a story that she thought was wrong or bad, "unfairness" was cited 89% of the time as to why something was viewed by the child as wrong (Killen, 1990).

Weekly Family Meetings with every family member present are a wonderful way to bring a family together, resolve conflicts, renew good feelings, and recapture a sense of hope. Learning to vote, compromise, share, bargain, be a team member, and gain self-esteem are all natural benefits of Family Meetings. The trick at first is to make each Family Meeting short and sweet and not to worry about handling family problems all at once. Each Family Meeting should be aimed at "good vibes," rather than simply airing gripes. Later after the voting process is established, Family Meetings will prove a good situation for expressing feelings and making hard decisions. Jesus utilized Family Meetings as family prayer and worship time, as well.

In my opinion, the most important feature of Family Meetings is to make every decision by unanimous agreement. Many families which have tried majority rule, direct parental authority, and other techniques have found that consensus works best. This means being patient and allowing for compromises and consensus building. Everyone, including each child, has equal and absolute veto power in Family Meeting decisions. It is okay to *persuade* family members toward a point of view but the taint of coercion should be avoided at all costs. This is aimed to comply with the divine mandate that creature will is inviolate. Even the highest of spirit essences, the divine Adjusters, subordinate themselves to the human will. "The Adjusters respect your sovereignty of personality; they are always subservient to your will" (UB 1204:5). Parents should wisely and patiently shepherd the agenda of Family Meetings to allow a child the voting power appropriate to his or her developmental level. It is important for parents not to "pull rank," by arbitrarily negating a Family Meeting decision. Gradually, parents and children alike will come to rely on Family Meeting decisions and recognize the fairness and empowerment in the process. "Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force; spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power" (UB 1765:4).

Family Meetings can be oriented for success by scheduling each weekly meeting at a time when everyone is pretty much up-beat, well rested, and not overly preoccupied. Good topics for Family Meetings are bedtime, allowances, care of things, animals, and money, children's rights,

parents' rights, personal feelings and family activities. A Family Meeting Notebook is extremely important and should contain a record of each consensual decision along with any notes or minutes of the meeting agreed to by all. Note taking along with all Family Meeting activities should be shared equally by having a different family member lead and keep notes each week. If all you do in your first meeting is to decide on the regular meeting time, explain the meaning of "consensus" and decide to all go out right after the meeting for a bike ride, hike in the park, or whatever your family enjoys, then count this as an extremely successful meeting.

One or both of the parents will need to be the "behind-the-scenes motivator" of the meeting process—actively promoting the benefits, added freedoms for kids, release from burdensome "bossing" by parents, and general improvements in esteem, mutual trust, patience, communication, good cheer, and a feeling of belonging. If a youngster (or adult) violates a Family Meeting decision, consequences should be discussed at the next meeting and negotiated until even the offending party votes voluntarily for his or her own penalty. Parents should also be willing to take a consequence for a broken agreement or other unfairness. Chores (divisions of labor) are an excellent topic for Family Meetings. The psychological and sociological literature make it clear that home chores are a ubiquitous feature of family life. However, the literature is conflicted in terms of outcome studies on the meaning, import, and value of assigned chores. For example, chores that simply serve the parents seem negatively related to moral response (White & Brinkerhoff, 1981). These facts suggest that the shared decisions of Family Meetings would be especially useful for making chores developmentally appropriate and non-arbitrary, as well as morally uplifting. With Family Meetings you can spare the rod while retaining true discipline and love. Do not be discouraged if kids filibuster and the process moves slowly. It takes about twelve weekly meetings to really bring about lasting change but is more than worth every effort made.

Woven throughout *The Urantia Book* are hundreds of clues, hints, and clearly explicit statements that appear to support the idea that Family Meetings and a shift from parental sovereignty to family sovereignty affords the highest type of family living and family loving possible. The shift in sovereignty should be gauged by the parent(s) to take into account the developmental level of each child. Too much voting power, too early, may confuse or intimidate a little one. Too little voting power, too late, may be a violation of the child's will beyond what is spiritually advantageous. Too much parental control, for too long, may only retard the developmental individuation such parental control is supposed to safeguard. In a recent study of 139 adolescent-parent relationships, the variables most strongly correlated with adolescent self-esteem were communication and participation while parental control was inversely related (Demo, Small & Savein-Williams, 1987).

Although I do not presume to entirely review *The Urantia Book* in this paper, I do hope that I can remind readers who are parents about some of the lofty and inspirational concepts available in this epochal revelation to mankind. The tremendous importance of family relations is underscored many times (e.g., UB 931:1, 942:2). I am particularly impressed with Jesus' talk with John Mark that Wednesday the lad spent alone with God in the hills of Judea. Jesus makes it perfectly clear that our early family life affects us greatly, not merely in this life and on the mansion worlds, but forever. "A human being's entire after life is enormously influenced by what happens during the first few years of existence" (UB 1922:4). The importance of family life to our world is emphasized in comments made by the midwayers at the end of this section: "It is our sincere belief that the gospel of Jesus' teaching, founded as it is on the father-child relationship, can hardly enjoy a world-wide acceptance until such a time as the home life of the modern civilized peoples embraces more of love and more of wisdom" (UB 1922:5). I am convinced that Family Meetings provide a sure way to augment both love and wisdom in the home. The parity of Family Meetings diminishes the problems of "the identified patient" or the family scapegoat. Pressures to compromise in order to secure unanimity provide practice at teamwork. With the continuity of keeping a Family Meeting notebook, the likelihood of wise follow-up and consistency is augmented.

The authors of *The Urantia Book* refer to Jesus' type of family-council practices by several terms; on page 1494:5 they use the phrase "family meeting," which I use. In the section entitled "The Nineteenth Year," I find the most explicit directions regarding the essentials of Family Meetings. Jesus invariably used the *positive* method of exhortation. He refrained from emphasizing evil by forbidding it. Family Meeting and prayer time went together. Jesus used wise discipline early in his siblings' training. He never arbitrarily disciplined his brothers or sisters. A watchword of their family was "fairness" (UB 1401). It seems reasonable that decisions relating to family matters were made by consensus, and that even punishment was agreed upon by all and awaited the voluntary agreement of even the offending person before being imposed. The story regarding little Jude is most poignant in this regard. Quoting from page 1401:4, "On three occasions when it was deemed wise to punish Jude for self-confessed and deliberate violations of the family rules of conduct, his punishment was fixed by the unanimous decree of the older children and was assented to by Jude himself before it was inflicted." It is from this passage, among others, that I infer the importance of the consensual decision-making process in Family Meetings.

There appears to be a parallel between the consensual nature of Jesus' Family Meetings and the technique of adjudication on the highest superuniverse levels. When a creature has made a final and complete choice of unreality as his universe destiny, the extinction broadcast is not issued until there is consensus among all three of the

Ancients of Days. This form of consensual justice is all the more impressive to me when we consider that the Ancients of Days are the most powerful, perfect, divine, and mighty rulers in the time-space creations (UB 210:1). Yet, despite all this power and perfection of judgment, our Heavenly Father requires that no action be taken until the sinner himself approves of the justness of the verdict (UB 217:7, 615:5, 611:6). What noble evidence that justice should be a group function! Trinity actions also seem commensurate with Family Meeting agreements. A Melchizedek of Nebadon states, "The Master, when on earth, admonished his followers that justice is never a *personal* act; it is always a *group* function. Neither do the Gods, as persons, administer justice. But they perform this very function as a collective whole, as the Paradise Trinity" (UB: 1146:1). Indeed a mighty admonition rests overhead when we as human parents seek to always rule our children by personal authority in place of family sovereignty.

Another intriguing parallel to the consensual Family Meeting process is manifested by Michael and his consort, the Universe Mother Spirit, in ruling a vast universe. "...[B]oth the Son and the Spirit function together, and in no creative act does the one do aught without the counsel and approval of the other" (UB 369:3). As you may recall, at the jubilee of jubilees the Divine Spirit pledges to Michael fidelity and obedience. He, in turn, acknowledges eternal dependence on her and equality with her as co-ruler of their domains. "And this becomes the transcendent pattern for the family organization and government of even the lowly creatures of the worlds of space. This is, in deed and in truth, the high ideal of the family..." (UB 369:1). The model of heavenly family life is also revealed by the Adamic order of sonship. In Paper 83, the Chief of Seraphim for our planet states, "Nevertheless, there is an ideal of marriage on the spheres on high. On the capital of each local system the Material Sons and Daughters of God do portray the height of the ideals of the union of man and woman in the bonds of marriage and for the purpose of procreating and rearing offspring" (UB 930:1).

So, it appears that from the lowest to the highest, from Earth to Salvington and on to Uversa, the Family Meeting idea is the fabric of universe governance and justice. No wonder we are encouraged to return to the family-council practices of the Andites. The heavenly model of family life encourages parents to unburden themselves of the sovereignty of personal authority and release themselves into the joy and light of consensual agreements—family sovereignty—the more Jesusonian approach to family harmony.

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

The Urantia Book makes it clear that children need both mothers and fathers and seems to strongly endorse the nuclear family (UB 531:4). The importance and strength of the nuclear family is supported by current human research, as well. The self-concept (esteem) of children who are disenfranchised from their nuclear family by divorce or

divorce and remarriage is lower than for intact families (Covell & Turnbull, 1982, Holman & Woodroffe-Patrick, 1988, Miller, 1984). Using a rating scale with 648 youths, Parish found that self-concept was significantly higher for youngsters from intact families in comparison with those from divorced remarried families. Also, children's ratings of fathers and mothers were higher for intact families (Parish, 1991). Long-term effects for a break-up of the nuclear family have not yet been substantiated (Amato, 1988). In at least one study, the quality and quantity of family interaction time was not adversely affected by loss of the nuclear family (Asmussen & Larson, 1991).

FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

Following the technological thinking of modern-day "general systems theory," many psychotherapeutic thinkers have applied the same model to the family unit. A key concept is that the family is larger than the sum of its parts. The family as a system is seen to have powerful and profound influences on family members—in most cases, system influences *per se* are stronger than is any family member as an individual. The well-publicized public television lecturer, John Bradshaw, has popularized and integrated many systems theory concepts into a program for self-healing commensurate with the A.A. recovery movement. Bradshaw sees families as generally dysfunctional, caught in a cycle of transgenerational soul sickness passed on from parents to children on an unconscious level. He says children are early wounded by toxic shame. It occurs when parents (caretakers) abandon children physically, emotionally, or by failing to affirm the differentiation of a child from the family system. He avows that parents have deep, unmet, narcissistic needs for love and attention stemming from their own childhoods. Parents seek fulfillment of these voracious appetites for affection from their own children. When the youngster responds naturally and emotionally and does not meet the needs of the parent, the child is on some level, subtly or overtly abandoned.

Abandonment creates an inner core of shame, a deep and irrational feeling of unworthiness. This shutting down of the natural or "wonder" child causes the stunting of emotional development and the emergence of a false-self to satisfy the demands of needy parents. He sees this wounding of the inner child as the basis for compulsive/addictive behavior in adults. Bradshaw says, "I believe that this neglected, wounded inner child of the past is the major source of human misery." He says that even well-intentioned parents inadvertently pass on to their children a poisonous and unexamined pedagogy that tends to make children develop a pseudo-self to satisfy parental demands. To the narcissistically co-dependent parent, many spontaneous acts that are life-affirming to the child are perceived by the insecure adult as a threat. The parent then does what was done to him or her as a child and repeats the cycle by abandoning his or her own child. The healing of the wounded inner child is usually a life-long process of

awareness, feeling the pain of shame, mourning, and gradual empowerment wherein the stunted inner child is walked vicariously through the emotional developmental stages the inner child never experienced (Bradshaw, 1988, 1989, 1990). Bradshaw often refers to this inner child as, "the divine child in exile" (Bradshaw, 1990, pp. 264-265).

Although Bradshaw's thinking may be challenged by some, experientially, many people are discovering truths in these views as they set about reclaiming their own wounded inner children. Also, there is a growing list of medical and psychological theoreticians who form a substantial backdrop for Bradshaw and have a common ground of beliefs regarding enmeshment, pseudo-self, differentiation, and the wounded inner child in the context of the family as an emotional field or system (Kerr, 1988). Many views are held in common by Murray Bowen, Virginia Satir, Hugh Missilldine, Don Jackson, Milton Erickson, R. D. Laing, Jay Haley, Margaret Singer, Nathan Ackerman, Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mahler, and many others.

COMMUNITY

"As are the families of the race or nation, so is its society. If the families are good, the society is likewise good. The great cultural stability of the Jewish and of the Chinese peoples lies in the strength of their family groups" (UB 939:4). Present day research is beginning to acknowledge the importance of the community or system beyond the family unit (Bronfenbrenner, 1988). A child is surrounded by microsystems such as school, work, and church that have direct, one-on-one relationships with family members. A child is then also affected by mesosystem factors that the child does not relate to directly. For example, work, school, and other microsystems may influence each other and only indirectly affect the developing child. The child may be influenced by whether or not parents work with the school or whether Dad is under stress at work. The mesosystem is then affected by a larger system, the exosystem, factors such as the mass media, local government, or the school board. The largest system is the macrosystem of culture, the "generation" or era in which one lives, social values, and so forth which interact with all other systems. The complex interdependencies of these different system levels indicate the family cannot exist as an island unto itself. The family is the natural unit of community at the microsystem and mesosystem levels and more. The values, habits, and attitudes conditioned in early family experience ultimately influence and condition the values and direction of the larger community in a reciprocal feedback loop. If such a feedback loop is positive, and filled with the benign virus of love, we might witness the sudden growth of the brotherhood of spirit-born humans, the flowering of the living temple of true community (cf. UB 1098:4).

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

What if civilized society were to seriously undertake the renovation of family values by a relatively sudden infusion of high, even divine ideals? In view of our present overload

of twentieth century troubles with their multivector threats to civilization, it seems unlikely that such a rejuvenation of lofty family practices could be impactful in less than several generations. However, granted spiritual pressure from above, social evolution may be accelerated sufficiently for humanity to witness drastic improvements in family with powerful ripple effects on every facet of society by the twenty-first century (cf. UB 598:2, 2082:10-2083:1). How might this come about? A transformed world through transformed individuals emerging from transformed families seems the most likely possibility (cf. UB 1119:1). "The great hope of Urantia lies in the possibility of a new revelation of Jesus with a new and enlarged presentation of his saving message which would spiritually unite in loving service the numerous families of his present-day professed followers" (UB 2086:2). "The hour is striking for a rediscovery of the true and original foundations of present-day distorted and compromised Christianity—the real life and teachings of Jesus" (UB 2083:1). "If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the coming of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world" (UB 20829-2083:1). "Urantia is now quivering on the very brink of one of its most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment" (UB 2082:7).

Consider for a moment what such a transformed world might look like. First of all, values would be shifted, emerging from true grass roots, from the individual's inner relationship with God. Justice would be generally acknowledged as being a group function. The social mores would incorporate more of the sister-brotherhood of all people under one deity. Racial, gender, religion, national origin and other caste distinctions would diminish resulting in less prejudice on the part of individuals, families, and nations. Bigotry based on "differentness" would be gradually replaced by tolerance based on the transformed individual's view that all humans are equal in the sight of God. Unity without uniformity as a value would usher in the social fruits of more brotherly affection and tolerance for individual creative expression. The greed-based competitive systems of material advancement would steadily diminish as a cooperative model evolves. Naturally emerging from the consensual decision making kind of family governance would be a generation of adults early trained in cooperation, consensus building, compromise, mutual support, and teamwork.

Parents would come to regard their children as the property of God rather than their property. No longer would children be so wounded by the insatiable emotional needs of unconscious and deeply wounded parents. Individual and social attention to child culture would wear away at the

dysfunctionalness of suprafamily systems. There would be more networking and social support for healthy parenting. If the lessons of world wars are learned in time, global government may shortly create the sovereignty of all mankind for all mankind. Energy and funds released from the twentieth century war machines could repair the stagnant educational, judicial, and health systems so needed by present-day families. In turn, transgenerational genetic problems could be more readily addressed and solved, once and for all, by democratic social agreements and voluntary family planning. The spiral of good would be analogous in power and scope to the degenerative poisonous pedagogies of the past, but would be opposite in polarity, resulting in a conspiracy of goodness with multiple and replicative social benefits.

Gone would be the days of brutalizing children in the name of religion. Molestation, rape, debauchery, and other forms of abuse would be nearly extinct. Locally based community courts, family courts, would adjudicate family-related problems, freeing up clogged and overburdened civil and criminal courts. Self-discipline emerging out of Family Meeting experiences could reduce the need for governmental control as such social control is replaced by self-control. Delinquency, divorce, high school drop-outs, drug abuse, unemployment, lack of elder care, crime, and many other social ills would be addressed with new energy now freed up from formerly dysfunctional suprafamily systems. Increased social service emerging from family training and the individual's desire to follow intuitive guidance would tangibly manifest in such a world. The light of a new age of spiritual progress could be glimpsed on many horizons. The time of the true reaping of a technological revolution aimed toward human good may be dawning. After all, we have not yet seriously tried such an upward spiral of Godly living. "In liaison with God, nothing—absolutely nothing—is impossible" (UB 291:3).

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CREATIVITY IN THE SPIRITUAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

CREATIVE FATHERHOOD: A TOPICAL STUDY

By Patrick Yesh

"For more than an hour Jesus and John continued this discussion of home life. The master went on to explain to John how a child is wholly dependent on his parents and the associated home life for all his early concepts of everything intellectual, social, moral, and even spiritual since the family represents to the young child all that he can first know of either human or divine relationships. The child must derive his first impressions of the universe from the mother's care; he is wholly dependent on the earthly father for his first ideas of the heavenly Father. The child's subsequent life is made happy or unhappy, easy or difficult, in accordance with his early mental and emotional life, conditioned by these social and spiritual relationships of the home. A human being's entire afterlife is enormously influenced by what happens during the first few years of existence." (p.1922)

The opening quote holds great import for child psychologists, parents, and child care workers. It is a warning of great responsibility to parents for the welfare of their children's entire afterlife. Children will project the qualities of God from their experiences with mom and dad. A child's social relationship behaviors take root in the family-home environment. Jesus' words to John offer a challenge to Urantia parents to create models of beautiful spiritual families. One challenge for parents is to open the inner life of their children, their inner life of spiritual creativity.

Creativity is one of the qualities that the Universe Father passes on to all his children. "Personality is inherently creative, but it thus functions only in the inner life of the individual." (p.1220) This creativity can be augmented when we join our will to God's. More than this, if one considers that God is the creative source of the universe, and a fragment of Him lives in each of us, then when we join our will to His in any creative endeavor, it may be His creativity that we feel flowing through us. This paper addresses the task of how parents can creatively teach children to see, hear, and speak in the ways of the spirit, so they continue through their life to grow in spirit perception and build spiritual relationships. First we will look at creativity and spiritual mind training from *The Urantia Book* perspective, Jesus' life examples, and then from a perspective of psychological and educational research. The condition of home and family today will be addressed. And finally, suggestions for immediate creative activities which will augment spiritual perception within the family will be offered.

The Vissells write in their book, *Models of Love*, "To be our child's first spiritual teacher is one of the greatest and most rewarding privileges a human being can have. There is no higher profession. In addition, there is no greater gift we can give the world than a child who is spiritually aware. We as parents must acknowledge and feel in our hearts the sacredness of our work." (p.13)

To listen with "The ear of spirit" (p.1605), see with the "eye

of spiritual faith" (p.1960), speak the "language of the spirit" (p.1605), and "(grow) up in spirit perception" (p.1605) are metaphors that Jesus used with his apostles to create an image of living in the spiritual world simultaneously, while living in the human world. Through living faith we create our spiritual world and that of our children's.

True human creativity lies in the mind, the inner life of the child and the adult. Children's minds can be gently guided towards matters of truth, beauty, goodness, and love. Children can be encouraged to be gentle and patient with themselves and others. Parents must be attentive to the natural talents of their children and nourish them. They can give their children enrichment opportunities and teach them how to socialize their talents, to yield the fruits of the spirit through their talents, and to worship God with their talents. (p.1918)

The rugged self-discipline recommended in *The Urantia Book* is a bit easier in later life if started at an early age in the home. Raising a family is a creative tap dance at best, where parents improvise most of the time. That tap dance can be fun if parents have an attitude of play, rather than reacting out of crisis in problem solving. Parents can approach family situations like Jesus did; consult the Father first, and put your inherent creative energies of mind and soul together with those of your creative children. Then find exciting methods to solve your daily problems of adjustments in family life. Teach children creative methods of problem solving by example—how to fatten on adversity. Rodan gives us an extraordinary method of problem solving. (p.1773-74)

CREATIVE SUPER-EGO BUILDING: A SUPERNAL SELF-IMAGE

Self-image and self-esteem are closely tied together. The child's perception that her role in the family is important, is crucial to her self-worth. A child can also feel good if she perceives herself as a special member of a spiritual family. The Urantia writers tell us "the purpose of all education is