

THE
FELLOWSHIP
FORUM

No. 2

For Readers of *The Urantia Book*

April, 1993

WRIGHTWOOD SERIES SEMINARS

Number 1

**Building the
Living Temple
of
Spiritual Fellowship**

APRIL 3-5, 1992

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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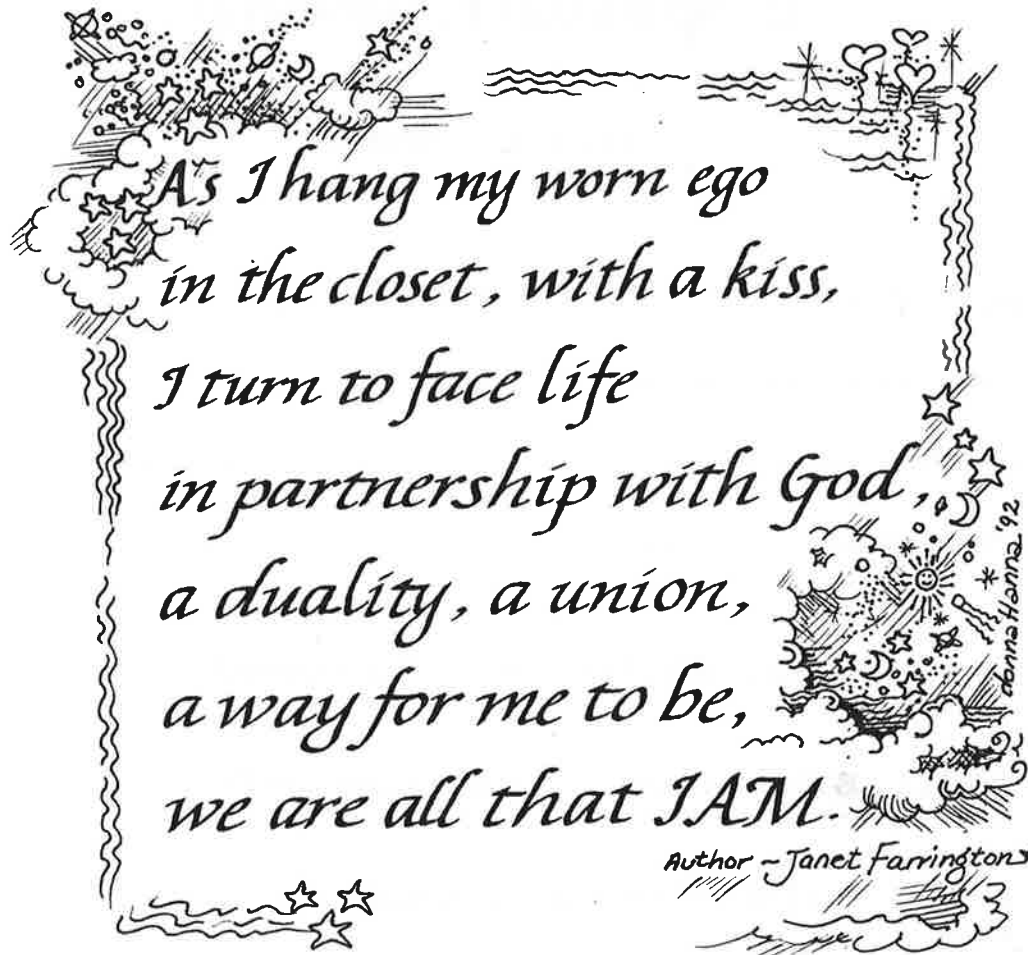
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THE WRIGHTWOOD SERIES SEMINARS:

“Building the Living Temple of Spiritual Fellowship”

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As I hang my worn ego
in the closet, with a kiss,
I turn to face life
in partnership with God,
a duality, a union,
a way for me to be,
we are all that I AM.

Author ~ Janet Farrington

Hanna Hanna '92

THE WRIGHTWOOD CONCEPT

By Dan Massey

The Wrightwood Series Seminars of the Education Committee of the Fellowship is a service project for readers of *The Urantia Book*. This project began in the summer of 1991 as an outgrowth of our commitment to work to enhance the quality of study of the book and to apply this improved understanding to the affairs of the organized readership.

There are three factors which underlie this program, which we have come to think of as:

- The Spirit of Wrightwood
- The Wrightwood Process
- The Wrightwood Opportunity

In true evolutionary fashion, these have evolved in reverse order of importance, while drawing us ever onward to the expression of our high spiritual ideals.

The Wrightwood Opportunity

The separation of the Fellowship (formerly known as Urantia Brotherhood) from its long-time relationship to Urantia Foundation occasioned great confusion within the organization as the reality of independence became apparent. The Executive Committee early decided to rely on the teachings of the book and the spiritual insight of its members as guides to the organization during these troubled times. Once the material stability and maintenance of the Fellowship had been assured, it became clear that carrying out the mission of the book to the peoples of Urantia would require a clear and confident understanding of the many-faceted teachings of the book, not only within the organizational leadership, but also within the readership at large. Only the thoughtful, spiritually motivated and guided actions of large numbers of readers and believers could possibly achieve the mission of the book.

The Executive Committee and the General Council are composed of long-time dedicated readers of the book who have been elected, through a political process, to conduct the operations and to determine the policies of the Fellowship. These groups, consisting of fourteen and thirty-six members, respectively, are inconveniently large to assemble for a long-term, intimate, coordinated topical study. In addition, the individual councilors vary too widely in their individual interests to provide a coherent focus of energy on a narrow topical issue.

By drawing together a small group of students of similar interests but of differing viewpoints, and by drawing these students from the readership at large, it should be possible to conduct a very intense, in-depth examination of the teachings of the book in a specific area. Hopefully, such an effort would result in the generation of materials which would be valuable and thought-provoking to the organizational leadership and which would serve as a way of

educating the readership at large to the deeper issues uncovered.

The organizational tranquility which emerged after the finalization of the separation from the Foundation provided an opportunity to experiment with this new approach. The new office facilities at 529 Wrightwood afforded a close, homelike environment in which extended meetings could be held, in total privacy, while remaining close to the life and conveniences of the city.

The Wrightwood Process

The essence of the Wrightwood process is in-depth preparation and intimate, thorough discussion. In considering the goals of the first meeting, the Education Committee decided to limit participation to a small number of very well-prepared participants, to require each participant to prepare a written position paper for presentation and eventual publication, and to ask the seminar participants to develop a plan of action for presenting the results of their discussion to the readership at large. The seminar meets on three days over a weekend to complete these tasks.

The process, an example of which is described in Janet Farrington's Introduction to this first set of position papers, has been adapted and is now being applied to the work of committees other than Education. For example, a seminar on constitutional and organizational issues was convened under a similar format and process by the Judicial Committee in October 1992.

The Spirit of Wrightwood

The topics and issues being addressed in the Wrightwood Series and via the Wrightwood Process are not simple matters on which readers think alike or on which consensus is readily achieved. The experience of these first seminars has shown us that, when readers have troubled themselves to become well informed on complex issues, and when these readers sincerely commit themselves to work through their differences by the power of mutual respect and love, there emerges a transcendent vision of unified values harmonizing the divergent concerns of the participants.

Rather than finding others converted to our viewpoint, we learn to appreciate the values which we hold in common and to understand our individual differences of viewpoint as the expression of these common values is worked out through our unique personalities and life experiences. The benefits of these insights, as they are projected through the readership at large, will become apparent in our enhanced understanding and application of these ideas and ideals in the development, evolution, and growth of planetary society.

INTRODUCTION

By Janet Farrington

During the Summer Intensive of 1991, Dan Massey presented a paper which explored the meaning of the statement made by Jesus to the Apostle Peter, "Who say you that I am?" After Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of the living God, Jesus stated: "This is a revelation of the spirit of my Father to your innermost souls. And when, therefore, you make this confession by the insight of the spirit of my Father which dwells within you, I am led to declare that on this foundation will I build the brotherhood of the kingdom of heaven. Upon this rock of spiritual reality will I build the living temple of spiritual fellowship in the eternal realities of my Father's kingdom." p. 1747:3.

Just prior to the Intensive, the 1991 Triennial Delegate Assembly had convened, which is to say that more than forty people with organizational abilities and interest in the Fellowship's future had assembled all in one place, along with many other inspired souls. There was much rousing discussion regarding the form and manner in which the Fellowship would/should continue to serve readers of *The Urantia Book*. Much of this discussion centered on questions regarding our community, our identity and the integration of family values into *Urantia Book* reader activities. After listening to and participating in these discussions, and then hearing Dan's address, I was eager to apply a question similar to that posed by Jesus to Peter, to us, namely: Who do we say that we are?

I wrote an article for the *Study Group Herald* exploring the question, which Marty Greenhut soundly rejected; his editorial policy is to report what is—not what should be. So I submitted the article to the Education Committee asking their advice on an appropriate forum. It just so happened that the Executive Committee had given the Education Committee an assignment called the Wrightwood Series Seminars; they were looking for topics and facilitators. Needless to say, I happily accepted the job as facilitator for one of the seminars.

Originally the working title was "Community, Identity and the Integration of Family Values," which related directly to the questions regarding who we are and what we do. However, after selecting the panelists and gaining their input on the topic, another evolution occurred. We began to realize that the community we were trying to identify was the living temple of spiritual fellowship Jesus talked about. And we realized that asking ourselves how we build this living temple was just as important as asking ourselves who or what we are.

Each panelist accepted a portion of the topic to research and write about, in accordance with their interest and previous work. There was discussion about how the varied

working titles of the papers were related. The topics did seem diverse. However, our realization that community was perhaps more than a collection of varied individuals with the same religion, philosophy or address allowed us a bit of latitude.

We decided to trust that a discussion of children and family, spiritual education, spiritual support groups, the soul and the evolution of the Supreme had a lot in common. We put our faith in the leading of our Adjusters, the work of the angels of social progress and the reality of the Spirit of Truth in our lives. We decided to just do it.

We gathered at 529 Wrightwood during the first week of April and spent Friday night exploring the general topic of "Building the Living Temple of Spiritual Fellowship" through open discussion, artwork and song—a semi-sophisticated bonding ritual that evolved somewhat spontaneously. On Saturday the panelists delivered their presentations, ending months of preparation and anticipation.

John Lange began the morning with a presentation titled "Spiritual Community / The Quest for Supremacy," which he introduced with this statement: "Pondering the infinite creation from our state of imperfection is awe-inspiring. Seeing ourselves as individually inadequate, we can only realize this vision as a collective effort. Thus we seek human association. On a deeper level, *The Urantia Book* challenges us with a great and exciting task to be performed. Consciously and unconsciously, we seek spiritual community to accomplish this task. The sum total of this process, I feel, is more correctly understood as 'The Quest for Supremacy.'"

John then gave a brief description of several diverse spiritual communities from *Urantia* history and related their experience to our movement. "We should ask ourselves, are we striving toward one large spiritual community or are we more realistically a community of communities."

Marta and Dave Elders next presented a paper titled, "The Soul Is the Entrance to True Community." They asked each panel member to "suspend our pre-conceived ideas of what soul is about..." and then they introduced a new concept of soul and community with this comment: "Consider your soul as your refuge from the isolation of your materialistic ego self and its worldly concerns; enter it as your sacred place of peace wherein the Spirit of your Father dwells and communes in loving fellowship with the spirit of his son, the Spirit of Truth. Now sense as well the presence of those of us here in this room, not as the material beings you know, but as the unique person each truly is. Know with certainty that this soul is the ground of our common being, the consciousness of selflessness, the

kingdom of heaven, the family of God, the essence of true spiritual community, the temple in which our Father, through union with each and all of us, becomes self-realized as community, true brotherhood, the Supreme."

The strength of this new concept of soul-based community resonated deeply within each panel member and became the glue that bound all six presentations together as an exquisite conceptual whole.

After lunch we moved to a discussion of family and listened to a paper by Bob Slagle on "The Family: Cornerstone of Civilization," where he explored what must be done to strengthen the family." The end of the twentieth century appears to be a time when strength for the family as the cornerstone of civilization must come from the top down, must be sought on spiritual levels first and then manifested in earthly life." Bob proposed family meetings as a way to do this. "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."

Following the presentation of Bob's paper, Patrick Yesh made his presentation on "Creativity in the Spiritual Education of Children." He provided many *Urantia Book* examples of Jesus' challenge to us to listen with the "ear of the spirit" and to "grow up in spirit perception." Patrick stated that "Through living faith we create our spiritual world and that of our children. 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 to grow in spirit perception." Patrick also challenged the panel to artistically interpret goals for the seminar and we did so, producing quite diverse and beautiful artwork.

Sara Blackstock presented a paper divided into two parts. The first titled "Children in Community" covered an "interweaving of personal observations and experience with children in community, highlighting some components of

community in general with ideals and concepts from *The Urantia Book*." She related her experiences with children and rituals, including the use of fire, temples, food, singing and service.

Sara also presented an evaluation of her experience with the Family of God Foundation (FOG) titled, "Pitfalls of Spiritual Community" in which she outlined five basic pitfalls of spiritual community based on her experience, and then she prescribed a possible antidote for each pitfall. This was a very fascinating look at the FOG experience from the inside out.

Finally, Jill Hull rounded out the evening with a thorough look at "Spiritual Support Groups from a *Urantia Book* Reader's Perspective." Jill's 45-page paper (from which she read briefly) provides an enlightening view of how we can enter into supportive spiritual relationship with one another through the group process. Her paper contains an overview of spiritual support groups, a look at intentional spiritual communities and many practical tips on how to start a group. Jill also included a resource list for those interested in exploring the topic further.

On Sunday we evaluated the first Wrightwood Series seminar and made plans for additional projects to be completed during the next year. The level of commitment from the group was outstanding, fueled by the tremendous sense of community building that occurred over the weekend. As Dave and Marta Elders wrote in summary, "We believe that during this weekend seminar of living, learning and working together we came to see and experience a new way of building a sense of community on our planet, from the inside out, from the consciousness of and in the soul."

We took a first step together towards understanding how to build the living temple of spiritual fellowship. We recognized that we must live the revelation step by step and build our community soul by soul.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Sara Blackstock, Concord, California

Sara has been active in the care and education of children for many years, both personally and professionally. She presents research and personal experience on school-age children within the spiritual community and their expression of relationship with God. Sara also writes about the learning gleaned from her experience with the Family of God Foundation.

Marta Elders, Ph.D., and Dave Elders, Darien, Connecticut

Marta and Dave have been active in the national and local *Urantia Book* readers' community for many years. As a couple they present a paper which explores our experience in and through the soul as the essence of building spiritual community.

Jill Hull, Ed.D., Boulder, Colorado

Jill is a high school teacher, licensed psychologist and active co-leader of the Women's Corps in Boulder. She has also been involved in a number of spiritual support groups through the years. Jill presents a comprehensive look at spiritual support groups and believes that such groups can further nurture religious growth.

John Lange, M.D. Fort Smith, Arkansas

John takes an active role in spiritual education in his community church. He presents a paper on patterns in spiritual communities past and present and on *The Urantia Book* reader community's quest for supremacy.

Bob Slagle, Ph.D. Sebastopol, California

Bob has done extensive research on the model of family life presented in the Jesus Papers. He is the author of *Tales of Joshua* and *The Family Meeting Handbook*. He presents a paper on family values and family life based on the model from *The Urantia Book*.

Patrick Yesh, M.Ed., Lister, British Columbia

Patrick is an artist and educator who has worked with families and children for many years. He presents a paper on the creative aspects of spiritual fellowship with children in family and community, and a discussion of Jesus as a role model for fatherhood.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY: THE QUEST FOR SUPREMACY

By John L. Lange, M.D.

INTRODUCTION

The Urantia Revelation has profoundly enriched the individual lives of its readers and devotees. In a chaotic world, it has offered meaning and direction to our individual life struggle. Beyond the story of personal salvation, we see its teachings applied and envision a better world. Pondering the infinite creation from our state of imperfection is awe-inspiring. Seeing ourselves as individually inadequate, we can only realize this vision as a collective effort. Thus we seek human association. On a deeper level, The Urantia Book challenges us with a great and exciting task to be performed. Consciously and unconsciously, we seek spiritual community to accomplish this task. The sum total of this process, I feel, is more correctly understood as "The Quest for Supremacy."

OUR CHALLENGE

The Urantia Revelation is unique in that it is not the work of a single personality, but many personalities indited the papers. Likewise, it is not presented to the world by a single personality, but by all of those who read, study and live by its teachings. The message of Jesus had to fit in to the groove thinking of the first century Roman world. In comparison, *The Urantia Book* is enmeshed in the technology and communication grid of the late 20th century. As our revelation is the written word, we are without a central authority and dissemination is limited only by literacy and human understanding. Experience tells us the greatest success is accomplished by sharing the book personally. Standing between these forces of dissemination and focus, we are an organization bringing itself up by the bootstraps and true community seems to elude us.

HISTORICAL COMMUNITY

In our present struggle for community, we can gain insight by exploring the life in four communities, two historical and two contemporary. Their common bond has given them spiritual unity and enhanced their mission in the world.

EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Will Durant said the Roman eagle RE made straight the way for Christ, and many think Christianity filled a spiritually impoverished empire. On the other hand, history is nearly silent regarding the spiritual fragrance and its persuasive power in these early Christian communities. People from every station and all walks of life were fully accepted in the community as they announced the spiritual equality of mankind. Women for the first time were given responsibilities in the community. They were orderly, industrious and financed other impoverished communities. They upheld a strict moral code for the time, ate many common meals together, and above all they loved and cared for each other. Little is written about these communities prior to Constantine. John Bennett in his work *Needs of A New Age Community* offers the most fascinating account. According to him, they existed in the Jewish communities of the

diaspora; in Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor. The inspiration and ethic of Christ offered hope and happiness and was the common bond which held them together. Their spiritual power arose not from their individual strength but by their love and sacrifice for one another, not by their civility but by their service to one another, and not by their tolerance but their wholehearted acceptance of one another. They were governed not by rules but by a new attitude and pattern of living.

Their great strength arose from living by the tenets of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount can be viewed as steps in the development of spiritual community, whereas the first four faith attitudes concern the inner life and the second four transcendent attitudes address the outer life and work in the community. These principles of living gave these communities an inner life not subject to disruptive forces. Against all odds they won the day, and by A.D. 300 a network of spiritual communities served as a foundation to disseminate the message of Michael to Urantia. At the end of this era Tertullium, one of the fathers of the Latin church, stated, "we are only of yesterday but already we fill the world."

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Bill W., the co-founder of A.A., for years struggled with alcoholism unsuccessfully. He regained his sanity only when he accepted his condition and "turned it over" to a higher power. He found he could only maintain his sobriety by helping other alcoholics. In his association with Dr. Bob, A.A. was founded, has since spread internationally, and has transformed millions of lives.

A.A. is a true community of kindred souls with a secular religious teaching at its core. Success occurs because it calls on two of the greatest reservoirs of power known to man, religion and association with one's fellows. Members are average citizens from all parts of the world and represent many of its occupations. Among members there is a common fellowship. True community results from having shared a common peril and serves as a cement which binds them together. Service is seen as the pathway to health and

sobriety. Therapy is based on the kinship of common suffering. For members life takes on new meaning; to watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, and to see a fellowship grow up around you.

The nature of God is not so important as one's relationship to him. Like rays of color in the spectrum of light, there are a multitude of paths in finding a relationship to the creator. For most this evolves unconsciously over a period of time. In summary, through "The Program" the alcoholic "overcomes his excessive concentration upon himself. Learning to depend upon a higher power and absorb himself in his work and with other alcoholics he remains sober day by day. The days add up to weeks, the weeks into months and years."

THE HOLOCAUST

The images of genocide from a Nazi concentration camp are well known to us. In spite of these adverse circumstances, communal efforts toward survival and spiritual growth are noteworthy. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl portrayed how a group of men with nothing left could find bliss. A man, it was discovered, could get used to anything, and in this life of endurance and sacrifice engendered a redefinition of the human character. Soon after admission to a camp, the situation separated the "saints from the swine." Those with an inner spiritual life survived the experience while those spiritually impoverished were destroyed.

The concentration camp experience enhanced group wisdom. Everything not connected with the immediate task of keeping one's self and one's closest friends alive lost its value. Many helped train each other to have a sense of humor as one of the soul's weapons in the act of self-preservation. Living with the certainty of suffering and possibility of death every minute, life took on new meaning. These men experienced a fundamental change in their attitude toward life: "It did not matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us." They learned their sacrifices, suffering and dying had meaning and if they survived with their bones intact this experience would be an asset in the future.

THE CASTRO

The AIDS epidemic in the San Francisco Castro district took on many characteristics of the Holocaust. The Castro was a direct descendent of the Haight Ashbury district and gay settlers began arriving around 1972. San Francisco, being a tolerant city, the Castro became a focus of gay liberation. With liberation self-restraint gave way to self-expression and the AIDS epidemic hit near the end of 1981. A devastating loss of young, productive lives ensued.

The response of this community to the immense challenges of this epidemic is truly remarkable. The inclusive and fully integrated programs of health care and social services will serve as a model to other communities. The Shanti Project, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, and Hospice provide

housing, counseling, help with medical bills and home care for AIDS patients. Through education community consciousness has been raised to encourage safe sex practices and prevent transmission. The churches have opened up to the community and the AIDS Interfaith Network has formed. New and original expressions of religious faith have arisen to embrace life as precious, even with the specter of death ever present. This struggle encouraged a new community attitude of growth, a new intimacy, a new maturity, and a sense of interdependence. Today, political enthusiasm has given way to personal relationships—friendships. Circles of friends function as families and true community is continuing to grow from this foundation of mutual trust.

These communities were chosen because of their unique formation under adverse and challenging circumstances. Through religious living each developed a pattern of spiritual unity through service to the larger benefit of mankind. These patterns are pure in the sense they have paid their social and political gravity debt to project over time to serve a future age.

The spiritual community offers an enlarged and transcendent pattern beyond individual religious growth. The individual lives by a set of rules whereas the community lives by a pattern of action. Altruism and an individual ministry give way to sacrifice and community service. Meditation and prayer become group worship and communion. Individual's self-respect is expanded to communal love and fellowship. Independence becomes an illusion with the realization and discovery that all experiential creations are interdependent in their realization of destiny. The qualities of self-reliance, self-assertion, and self-awareness are incorporated into the community and are mutual trust, group wisdom, and communication. Finally, in the community the individual's religious experience is better directed toward spiritual growth.

THE QUEST FOR SUPREMACY

The previous communities are distinguished expressions of the spiritual fruit from the Fourth Epochal Revelation. In essence, our communal mission with the Fifth Epochal Revelation is to encourage relationships and living patterns contributing to the growth of the Supreme. We must accept our role as created co-creators as we dedicate our life experiences to the Supreme.

As one pours through *The Urantia Book*, there is a sense of purpose in the order in which it has been presented. As one reads from Part I to Part III, there is a gradual shift from eternity and first causes to results in time and space. It seems as though our universe journey is taken in reverse order and time is taken along the way to clarify misunderstandings and to enhance partial truths resulting from disordered planetary thought. Near the end of Part III this ministry to the mind is nearly complete, and a level intellectual playing field is established from which to interpret higher states of reality. As Paul of Tarsus taught, salvation

is open to all, likewise the message from the Urantia teaching is that understanding is open to all.

The Supreme papers are then presented at the end of Part III as something totally new. These papers seem to be a watershed as the teachings build up to and away from them. They also contain the most explicit statements concerning the challenge of today and what we are about as a group. On Page 1260, the debate of faith versus works is eternally put to rest by the statement "with God the Father, sonship is the great relationship. With God the Supreme, achievement is the prerequisite to status—one must do something as well as be something." We understand our role as created co-creators in the creature-creator unification of evolving deity. We participate by effort, perseverance and faith.

The challenge of time and space is stated on Page 1275. "In the evolutionary superuniverses energy-matter is dominant except in personality, where spirit through the mediation of mind is struggling for the mastery." This is necessarily a group process because we are taught on Page 1290 "all experiential creations are interdependent in their realization of destiny." We know that with the Father it is the each relationship and with the Supreme it is the all relationship. And we are bound together and driven in this collective process by love. Love has been described to me as the energy of the personality circuit. Here love is portrayed as a dynamic force on Page 1289: "All true love is from God and man receives divine affection as he himself bestows this love upon his fellows. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured. It is alive, free, thrilling and always moving... The great circuit of love is from the Father through his sons to brothers and hence to the Supreme."

THE READER FAMILY—LOCAL COMMUNITY

I feel there are two forces at work in the Urantia movement and, as already stated, they are the outward direction of dissemination and the inward direction of focus. This has also been termed outreach and inreach. Jacob Needleman describes these as the two fundamental forces of the cosmic order, the movement of creation and the movement of return.

We should ask ourselves, are we striving toward one large spiritual community or are we more realistically a community of communities. We should consider ourselves the latter, with the local family of readers as the core of our community experience. This may be represented by a society, a local study group, or a close network of readers. Having studied the teachings, understanding opens the way for all to perceive spirit reality. The culmination of this process is the ability to know and nourish each other's soul. They are held together by a common bond of experience through the Urantia Revelation and their love for one another.

In this context, the concept of family can be redefined. With our common ground as a source of solidarity, we can become

more diverse and still be inclusive. Spiritual needs could be fulfilled; for example, single people could satisfy child-rearing requirements prior to the mansion worlds. Group activities of worship and work open the opportunity for group transformation.

OUTREACH, THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

As the process of dissemination or outreach extends our readership through the world, community is begun through personal contact and by regional conferences beginning to take on the dimensions of spiritual town meetings. We should also simplify our message because mankind is influenced decisively by ideas that all can share.

We stand at the vanguard of a world being made ready for the reception of the Urantia Revelation. In a recently widely publicized article entitled "The End of History?", the author claims history has reached an end point with the success of Western liberal democracy. The noble goals of past human adventurism are now provided for by the global economy. Society will soon be reduced to the role of perpetual caretaking. A critic observes that little consideration has been given to the higher needs of society now crying for expression, namely the longing for spirituality and community. The opening up of the developed world from totalitarian regimes presents us with an unprecedented challenge.

These bruised souls are now crying for spiritual rejuvenation where our challenge will mainly involve cultural and language barriers.

The larger challenge is our presentation to the developing world. Hope for the developing world rests with a village-based agrarian civilization using the world's oldest cultures as vehicles to assimilate the artifacts of scientific achievement. A large majority of the world's population inhabits these two million communities. The global village has come of age. A critical mass of human energy has evolved to integrate these artifacts while still maintaining the sovereignty of individual community expression. These artifacts I feel are initially incorporated into three major areas of development: medical care (public health measures), food (self-sufficient agricultural techniques), and education (information, storage and assimilation). Resulting will be a decentralized global network of largely self-sufficient communities.

Care must be taken to insure this progress takes root through an understanding of reciprocal obligation which leaves the native and moral religious beliefs undisturbed, lest the developed world is accused of colonization on a larger scale. There are six main cultural variations in the rural third world: Confucian, Malay-Javanese, Hindu, Christian, Islamic, and African. The moral and ethical system accompanying aid from the developed world should be simplified to incorporate basic values inherent in all of these cultures. All people can share these three values: family, brotherhood, and duty. Family life (filial piety) is the pattern for the

larger community spirit. Brotherhood (the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man) will promote an eventual global culture. Duty (cosmic morality) will require the devotion to attain universe citizenship.

Summary—Cosmic Community

The Urantia Revelation has challenged us to imagine and work toward a better world. We have come to view this as a communal effort. As we struggle toward community, we can gain insight from historical and contemporary communities. Beyond this the Supreme challenge encourages us to develop community relationships of a transcendent nature in that we may see into and nourish the souls of one another. The group message of supremacy takes us from the individual message of sonship, worship, achievement and salvation toward a sense of family with communion, brotherhood and duty as communal goals. These are ideas that all can share.

The Urantia Book is a pattern at the event horizon of the

more encompassing Urantia Revelation, which is to me the experiential outgrowth of its teachings; past, present, and future. Led by the spirit and characterized by the grooved fingerprint of human experience, those before us left a rich heritage of experience. This encourages us to face present and future challenges. We begin to realize we are a community of souls: those having graduated, those living, and those yet to be born.

Jacob Needleman describes two types of love, mystical love and ontological love. Mystical love may be defined as the caring for the inward directed or internal aspect of human nature. Ontological love may be defined as the transmission to another of conditions of living thinking and experiencing that foster the growth of the intermediate principle in human nature, the soul. This, as I see it, is our mission as a community. In essence, the process of building the living temple of spiritual fellowship is finding God in your own heart and at the same time discovering God in the hearts of your fellow brothers and sisters.

THE SOUL IS THE ENTRANCE INTO TRUE COMMUNITY

By Marta and David Elders

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this paper, we have learned experientially that there is a paradox in what we are about to present: the truths of the soul cannot be known through mind alone; thus, it is necessary to enter into the consciousness of the soul before our minds are convinced that it is possible for us to do so. In other words, we are asking you to suspend your pre-conceived notions of what the soul is about, to listen without judgment and intellectual analysis, and to journey upward and inward to reach the light of truth which lights this place we call the soul.

Consider your soul as your refuge from the isolation of your materialistic ego self and its worldly concerns; enter it as your sacred place of peace wherein the Spirit of your Father dwells and communes in loving fellowship with the spirit of his son, the Spirit of Truth. Now sense as well the presence of those of us here in this room, not as the material beings you know, but as the unique person each truly is. Know with certainty that this soul is the ground of our common being, the consciousness of selflessness, the kingdom of heaven, the family of our God, the essence of true spiritual community, the temple in which our Father, through union with each and all of us, becomes self-realized as community, true brotherhood, the Supreme. Focus not on how this makes you feel, but instead, focus on the reality, the essence, of the others of whose presence you are now aware. As the true and genuine reality of those about you grows in your consciousness, you will be increasingly certain, without thinking about it, that in loving another person unselfishly you are making them real in your experience. And, as you do so, you will know, again without thought, that your own reality is validated by God's love for you.

Now that we have entered this living temple of truth and made each other personally present, that is to say, real, let us together explore what beauties we can just begin to see. But try to do it from this place, this consciousness, from the inside. For if we allow ourselves to descend into mind alone, our ego selves will change our experience of the soul from *of* to *about*, from inside to outside.

CONCEPTS

I. This Living Spiritual Temple in Which We Can Choose to Live Is the Supreme Being. It is our contention that the living temple of spiritual community is the shared experience of supremacy. The essence of this process is union—the union of God and mankind in the experiential reality of time/space. Just as our personal sonship experience with the existential God is our recognition of the reality of his Fatherhood, the experience of the reality of other sons, brotherhood, is our recognition of the reality of the Supremacy of God. The union of the individual with God creates man's soul; the union of all creatures with God creates the oversoul, the realization of God's Supreme self in time and space. Thus, the experience of the:

- Fatherhood of God, the realization of sonship, is equivalent to relationship with existential Deity.
- Brotherhood of man, the realization of the sonship of others, is equivalent to relationship with experiential Deity, the Supreme.

"Man's urge for Paradise perfection, his striving for God-attainment, creates a genuine divinity tension in the living cosmos which can only be resolved by the evolution of the immortal soul; this is what happens in the experience of a single mortal creature. But when all creatures and all Creators in the Grand Universe likewise strive for God-

attainment and divine perfection, there is built up a profound cosmic tension which can only find resolution in the sublime synthesis of almighty power with the spirit person of the evolving God of all creatures, the Supreme Being." (1276:7-1277:0)

"The Supreme is the beauty of physical harmony, the truth of intellectual meaning, and the goodness of spiritual value. He is the sweetness of true success and the joy of everlasting achievement. He is the oversoul of the grand universe, the consciousness of the finite cosmos, the completion of finite reality, and the personification of Creator-creature experience. Throughout all future eternity God the Supreme will voice the reality of volitional experience in the trinity relationships of Deity." (1278:5)

"This universe procession of descending God-revealing Creators and ascending God-seeking creatures is revelatory of the Deity evolution of the Supreme, in whom both descend and ascenders achieve mutuality of understanding, the discovery of eternal and universal brotherhood." (1278:6-1279:0)

"The Supreme Being did not create man, but man was literally created out of, his very life was derived from, the potentiality of the Supreme. Nor does he evolve man; yet is the Supreme himself the very essence of evolution. From

the finite standpoint, we actually live, move, and have our being within the immanence of the Supreme." (1283:1)

"The great Supreme is the cosmic oversoul of the grand universe. In him the qualities and quantities of the cosmos do find their deity reflection; his deity nature is the mosaic composite of the total vastness of all creature-Creator nature throughout the evolving universes. And the Supreme is also an actualizing Deity embodying a creative will which embraces an evolving universe purpose." (1285:4)

"Man can discover the Father in his heart, but he will have to search for the Supreme in the hearts of all other men; and when all creatures perfectly reveal the love of the Supreme, then will he become a universe actuality to all creatures. And that is just another way of saying that the universes will be settled in light and life." (1290:9)

II. The Individual Souls of Human Beings Are the Building Blocks of the Living Temple of the Supreme. As individuals find their Father within, thereby realizing the reality of their sonship, then choose to express this reality in the living of their outer, daily lives, the soul is built. This soul reflects the spiritual character and consciousness of the union of a finite mortal being with the infinite and eternal God. The soul is the child of our personality relationship with our Father-God in and through that soul, and our personality relationships with our fellows in the living temple of the Mother-Supreme.

"Despite the fact that you cannot, in this universe age, personally find him [Supreme] as you can and will find the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, nevertheless, the Paradise ascent and subsequent universe career will gradually create in your consciousness the recognition of the universe presence and the cosmic action of the God of all experience. The fruits of the spirit are the substance of the Supreme as he is realizable in human experience." (1290:3) "...for the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." (381:6)

"Even the experience of man and Adjuster must find echo in the divinity of God the Supreme, for, as the Adjusters experience, they are like the Supreme, and the evolving soul of mortal man is created out of the pre-existent possibility for such experience within the Supreme." (1287:2)

"All soul-evolving humans are literally the evolutionary sons of God the Father and God the Mother, the Supreme Being. But until such time as mortal man becomes soul-conscious of his divine heritage, this assurance of Deity kinship must be faith realized. Human life experience is the cosmic cocoon in which the universe endowments of the Supreme Being and the universe presence of the Universal Father (none of which are personalities) are evolving the morontia soul of time and the human-divine finaliter character of universe destiny and service." (1289:1)

"The great challenge that has been given to mortal man is this: Will you decide to personalize the experiential value

meanings of the cosmos into your own evolving selfhood? or by rejecting survival, will you allow these secrets of Supremacy to lie dormant, awaiting the action of another creature at some other time who will in his way attempt a creature contribution to the evolution of the finite God? But that will be his contribution to the Supreme, not yours." (1284:6)

"...you could not entertain this belief [in the divinity of Jesus' Sonship with the living God] as a result of mere human knowledge. This is a revelation of the spirit of my Father to your inmost souls. And when, therefore, you make this confession by the insight of the spirit of my Father which dwells within you, I am led to declare that on this foundation will I build the brotherhood of the kingdom of heaven. Upon this rock of spiritual reality will I build the living temple of spiritual fellowship in the eternal realities of my Father's kingdom.'" (1747:3) "And ever since that day this same Jesus has been building that living temple upon that same eternal foundation of his divine sonship, and those who thereby become self-conscious sons of God are the human stones which constitute this living temple of sonship erecting to the glory and honor of the wisdom and love of the eternal Father of spirits." (1747:5)

III. It is in and through Our Souls that We Make True and Lasting Contact with Other Personalities, Divine and Human (those of our fellows who have self-consciously attained this level of realization, anywhere or anytime in the universes). As we ascend through the mind to enter into our souls and begin to interact with our fellows from this level of consciousness, we leave our materialistic ego selves at the door. In so doing, we are enabled to relate to others simply and directly as unique personalities sharing common Father/Mother parentage and in the context of the shared, common experiential character of our souls. To reach this place, we have been saved from the isolation of the materialistic self (the definition of Jesus' religion) and have come to know that our individual souls offer to each and all of us the experience of a common self, the Supreme Being. From this place, the soul, we can love others unselfishly as our self since these others are our self, and thereby experience the validating love of God. There is no more profound and lasting form of contact between personalities.

"When you once begin to find God in your soul, presently you will begin to discover him in other men's souls and eventually in all the creatures and creations of a mighty universe." (1733:1)

"Prejudice blinds the soul to the recognition of truth, and prejudice can be removed only by the sincere devotion of the soul to the adoration of a cause that is all-embracing and all-inclusive of one's fellow men. Prejudice is inseparably linked to selfishness. Prejudice can be eliminated only by the abandonment of self-seeking and by substituting therefor the quest of the satisfaction of the service of a cause that is not only greater than self, but one that is even

greater than all humanity—the search for God, the attainment of divinity.” (1774:5)

“To Jesus the kingdom was the sum of those individuals who had confessed their faith in the fatherhood of God, thereby declaring their wholehearted [whole-souled] dedication to the doing of the will of God, thus becoming members of the spiritual brotherhood of man.” (1865:1)

“Remember: I am the real vine, and you are the living branches. He who lives in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit of the spirit [substance of the Supreme] and experience the supreme joy of yielding this spiritual harvest. If you will maintain this living spiritual connection with me, you will bear abundant fruit. If you abide in me and my words live in you, you will be able to commune freely with me, and then can my living spirit so infuse you that you may ask whatsoever my spirit wills and do all this with the assurance that the Father will grant us our petition. Herein is the Father glorified: that the vine has many living branches, and that every branch bears much fruit. And when the world sees these fruit-bearing branches—my friends who love one another, even as I have loved them—all men will know that you are surely my disciples.” (1944:4)

“The true cosmic meaning of this rule of universal relationship [the golden rule] is revealed only in its spiritual realization, in the interpretation of the law of conduct by the spirit of the Son to the spirit of the Father that indwells the soul of mortal man. And when such spirit-led mortals realize the true meaning of this golden rule, they are filled to overflowing with the assurance of citizenship in a friendly universe, and their ideals of spirit reality are satisfied only when they love their fellows as Jesus loved us all, and that is the reality of the realization of the love of God.” (1950:3)

IV. The Factors Contributing to Soul Growth. We believe that there are three essential factors in the birth, growth, and nurturance of the soul: faith, self-conscious, moral decision-making, and love. Faith is a gift which is grounded in the fact of our sonship; it represents the qualitative factor in soul growth. Self-conscious, moral decision-making is an ascension faculty derived from the will associated with the personality which God bestows on each human organism, operating through mind; it represents the quantitative factor in soul growth. Divine love, present in the personality relationship of sonship, is expressed both in faith and self-conscious, moral decision-making—the desire to do good to God and man, respectively. Not only have we been given the responsibility to initiate, grow, and nurture our own souls, but importantly, the realization of the rule of life itself requires that we accept the responsibility to provide loving sustenance for the initiation, growth, and nurturance of the souls of all truth-seeking persons with whom we come into contact. This is especially true with regard to the children we bring into the world—in addition to providing for their material needs, we are responsible for so loving and valuing their existence and so stimulating their minds that they will self-consciously realize their own

gifts of faith and moral will and use these gifts to develop their own souls. If we love others from our soul, especially our children, we do God’s will by making these others *real* in our experience, and, in turn, we are validated (made real) by God’s love for us. By loving us in return, these others, too, give life to our existence and are thereby validated by God’s love for them. And so the cycle goes.

Faith

“Your secret of the mastery of self is bound up with your faith in the indwelling spirit, which ever works by love. Even this saving faith you have not of yourselves; it also is a gift of God. And if you are the children of this living faith, you are no longer the bondslaves of the self but rather the triumphant masters of yourselves, liberated sons of God.” (1610:2)

“Faith unites moral insight with conscientious discrimination of values, and the pre-existent evolutionary sense of duty completes the ancestry of true religion. The experience of religion eventually results in the certain consciousness of God and in the undoubted assurance of the survival of the believing personality.” (1105:3)

“Belief has attained the level of faith when it motivates life and shapes the mode of living. The acceptance of a teaching as true is not faith; that is mere belief. Neither is certainty nor conviction faith. A state of mind attains faith levels only when it actually dominates the mode of living. Faith is a living attribute of genuine personal religious experience. One believes truth, admires beauty, and reverences goodness, but does not worship them; such an attitude of saving faith is centered on God alone, who is all of these personified and more.” (1114:5)

“From the heights of eternal glory the divine Spirit descends, by a long series of steps, to meet you as you are and where you are and then, in the partnership of faith, lovingly to embrace the soul of mortal origin and to embark on the sure and certain retracement of those steps of condescension, never stopping until the evolutionary soul is safely exalted to the very heights of bliss from which the divine Spirit originally sallied forth on this mission of mercy and ministry.” (380:4)

“Faith reveals God in the soul.” (1106:7)

“Through religious faith the soul of man reveals itself and demonstrates the potential divinity of its emerging nature by the characteristic manner in which it induces the mortal personality to react to certain trying intellectual and testing social situations.” (1108:3)

“The mastery of the cosmic circles is related to the quantitative growth of the morontia soul, the comprehension of supreme meanings. But the qualitative status of this immortal soul is wholly dependent on the grasp of living faith upon the Paradise-potential fact-value that mortal man is a son of the eternal God.” (1211:3)

“And then, forthwith, will this faith vanquish fear of men

by the compelling presence of that new and all-dominating love of your fellows which will so soon fill your soul to overflowing because of the consciousness which has been born in your heart that you are a child of God." (1438:0)

"When my children once become self-conscious of the assurance of the divine presence, such a faith will expand the mind, ennoble the soul, reinforce the personality, augment the happiness, deepen the spirit perception, and enhance the power to love and be loved." (1766:8)

"But expectant faith will ever keep the hope-door of man's soul open for the entrance of the eternal spiritual realities of the divine values of the worlds beyond." (2083:4)

Self-Conscious, Moral Decision-Making

"A human mind discerning right and wrong and possessing the capacity to worship God [i.e. being able to use the adjuncts of worship and wisdom], in union with a divine Adjuster, is all that is required in that mortal to initiate and foster the production of his immortal soul of survival qualities if such a spirit-endowed individual seeks God and sincerely desires to become like him, honestly elects to do the will of the Father in heaven." (70:1)

"But selfhood of survival value, selfhood that can transcend the experience of death, is only evolved by establishing a potential transfer of the seat of identity of the evolving personality from the transient life vehicle—the material body—to the more enduring and immortal nature of the morontia soul and on beyond to those levels whereon the soul becomes infused with, and eventually attains the status of, spirit reality. This actual transfer from material association to morontia identification is effected by the sincerity, persistence, and steadfastness of the God-seeking decisions of the human creature." (1229:5)

"Every decision you make either impedes or facilitates the function of the Adjuster; likewise do these very decisions determine your advancement in the circles of human achievement." (1210:1)

"Every time man makes a reflective moral choice, he immediately experiences a new divine invasion of his soul. Moral choosing constitutes religion as the motive of inner response to the outer conditions." (2095:7) "The sum total of personality realization on a material world is contained within the successive conquest of the seven psychic circles of mortal potentiality." (1209:1)

"The psychic circles are not exclusively intellectual, neither are they wholly morontial; they have to do with personality status, mind attainment, soul growth, and Adjuster attunement." (1209:3)

"Perhaps these psychic circles of mortal progression would be better denominated cosmic levels—actual meaning grasps and value realizations of progressive approach to the morontia consciousness of initial relationship of the evolutionary soul with the emerging Supreme Being. And it is this very relationship that makes it forever impossible

fully to explain the significance of the cosmic circles to the material mind. These circle attainments are only relatively related to God-consciousness. A seventh or sixth circler can be almost as truly God-knowing—sonship conscious—as a second or first circler, but such lower circle beings are far less conscious of experiential relation to the Supreme Being, universe citizenship." (1211:1)

Love

"You are destined to live a narrow and mean life if you learn to love only those who love you. Human love may indeed be reciprocal, but divine love is outgoing in all its satisfaction-seeking. The less of love in any creature's nature, the greater the love need, and the more does divine love seek to satisfy such need. Love is never self-seeking, and it cannot be self-bestowed. Divine love cannot be self-contained; it must be unselfishly bestowed." (1739:6)

"Spiritual living mightily increases true self-respect. But self-respect is not self-admiration. Self-respect is always coordinate with the love and service of one's fellows. It is not possible to respect yourself more than you love your neighbor; the one is the measure of the capacity for the other." (1740:1) "The measure of the spiritual capacity of the evolving soul is your faith in truth and your love for man..." (1740:4)

"In religion, Jesus advocated and followed the method of experience, even as modern science pursues the technique of experiment. We find God through the leadings of spiritual insight, but we approach this insight of the soul through the love of the beautiful, the pursuit of truth, loyalty to duty, and worship of divine goodness. But of all these values, love is the true guide to real insight." (2076:5)

"Love is the greatest of all spirit realities. Truth is a liberating revelation, but love is the supreme relationship." (1608:1)

"While you cannot observe the divine spirit at work in your minds, there is a practical method of discovering the degree to which you have yielded the control of your soul powers to the teaching and guidance of this indwelling spirit of the heavenly Father, and that is the degree of your love for your fellow man. This spirit of the Father partakes of the love of the Father, and as it dominates man, it unfailingly leads in the directions of divine worship and loving regard for one's fellows." (1642:2)

"Love is the desire to do good to others." (648:4)

"Love, unselfishness, must undergo a constant and living readaptative interpretation of relationships in accordance with the leading of the Spirit of Truth. Love must thereby grasp the ever-changing and enlarging concepts of the highest cosmic good of the individual who is loved. And then love goes on to strike this same attitude concerning all other individuals who could possibly be influenced by the growing and living relationship of one spirit-led mortal's love for other citizens of the universe. And this entire living adaptation of love must be effected in the light of both the environment of present evil and the eternal goal

of the perfection of divine destiny." (1950:5)

V. The Soul as the Entrance into Community. Entering into the souls we create in partnership with God is entrance into the living temple of spiritual community. Therein we find and experience not only the union of God and each person, but the union of God and all persons. Our souls are like doorways into a single combined self, the Supreme Being, the oversoul of the grand universe, God experientially unified in time/space. This living temple of souls, as entrance into the oversoul of our communal being, the Supreme, is a place of peace and progress, being and progressing, seeking and finding, loving and acting. It is the realm wherein we learn that by unselfishly loving other persons, we make them real in our soul experience and, thereby, add supreme dimension to their reality in the oversoul of finite experience, the Supreme Being. This is surely consistent with God's will, since it is the loving expression of his will which gives validation, reality, to each and every creature. It is in this realm of the soul where revelation teaches, where worship blossoms, where unselfish decisions expand capacities for growth in meanings and values, and where true community flourishes. This is the kingdom of God, the ground of our common being, the temple of souls, wherein our true morontia self emerges from the cocoon of material life experience to join with our Creator and our fellows in the self-conscious experience of shared sonship, which is true community.

"Your personalities may be refreshingly diverse and markedly different, while your spiritual natures and spirit fruits of divine worship and brotherly love may be so unified that all who behold your lives will of a surety take cognizance of this spirit identity and soul unity; they will recognize that you have been with me and have thereby learned, and acceptably, how to do the will of the Father of heaven. You can achieve the unity of the service of God even while you render such service in accordance with the technique of your own original endowments of mind, body, and soul." (1591:4-1592:0)

"All true love is from God, and man receives the divine affection as he himself bestows this love upon his fellows. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured; it is alive, free, thrilling, and always moving. Man can never take the love of the Father and imprison it within his heart. The Father's love can become real to mortal man only by passing through that man's personality as he in turn bestows this love upon his fellows. The great circuit of love is from the Father, through sons to brothers, and hence to the Supreme. The love of the Father appears in mortal personality by the ministry of the indwelling Adjuster. Such a God-knowing son reveals this love to his universe brethren, and this fraternal affection is the essence of the love of the Supreme." (1289:3)

"A human ascender can find the Father; God is existential and therefore real, irrespective of the status of experience in the total universe. But no single ascender will ever find

the Supreme until all ascenders have reached that maximum universe maturity which qualifies them simultaneously to participate in this discovery." (1290:7)

"And when such spirit-led mortals realize the true meaning of this golden rule, they are filled to overflowing with the assurance of sonship in a friendly universe, and their ideals of spirit reality are satisfied only when they love their fellows as Jesus loved us all, and that is the reality of the realization of the love of God." (1950:3)

REMEMBRANCE

Jesus, at the end of his last communal supper with his apostles on this planet, used two commonplace but universal symbols as tools to stimulate the mind of man to enter through the soul into the living temple of spiritual community, the Supreme Being. This remembrance was not just about recalling the life in and of the soul which Jesus lived among men, but was also a recognition of the communal aspect of the union of God and all persons in the oversoul of Supremacy. Even more, this simple act of supping together on the basic stuff of material existence, bread and water, is a living parable of the transformation of human self-consciousness from personality identity first with the body, then the mind, then into the realm of the soul wherein contact with the spirit takes place. Jesus asked first for remembrance, then recognition, and finally realization—realization through experience of the union of the nature of the Father and each son, and the Father and all sons. This remembrance is an invitation, an invitation for each of us to follow the leading of the Spirit of Truth and to enter the living temple of spiritual community, the Supreme Being, through the opening doorway of our souls.

"This new teacher is the Spirit of Truth who will live with each one of you, in your hearts, and so will the children of light be made one and be drawn toward one another. And in this very manner will my Father and I be able to live in the souls of each one of you and also in the hearts of all other men who love us and make that love real in their experiences by loving one another, even as I am now loving you." (1949:1)

APPENDIX

Discussed briefly below are some other ideas, speculations, and questions which we believe need further research and consideration.

1. Fatherhood of God/Brotherhood of Man. We believe that one way to understand the experiential meaning of these oft-used terms is this: the Fatherhood of God represents the individual person's relationship with existential deity, God the Father; the brotherhood of man represents all persons' relationship with experiential deity, the Supreme mother. In essence, both combined represent the experience in the soul of the "living family of God." We believe that it is just this combined experience which Jesus asked us to remember, recognize, and realize in the parable of the remembrance.

2. Soul to Oversoul Relationship. In thinking about this relationship, we have speculated that what we describe and experience as our own discrete souls, are, in reality, the unified, single oversoul of the Supreme Being—seen from each person's unique personality point of view. Philosophically, this is consistent with:

a. The many statements that the Supreme is, in truth, the unified, experiential personalization of the existential God, qualified by time and space. In a sense, this suggests that as each person becomes increasingly God-like, a phenomenon which is faithfully portrayed in the soul of each, that soul-expressed God-likeness merges into the unified mosaic which is the Supreme—God, in time/space. Diversity is maintained in that Supreme unity by virtue of the uniqueness of personality and the consequent eternal identity resulting from personality/soul fusion with the Thought Adjuster. Thus, the existential, inseparable unity and diversity of the great God, expressed in the Trinity, is experientially evolved in the finite realms of reality.

b. Jesus said that where two or more persons gather in his name, he will be personally present. Why two or more? His spirit is present with each of us individually as the Spirit of Truth; why, however, is it necessary for there to be at least two for him to be present personally? And, further, how is that possible, since we are told that his personality cannot be in more than one place at a time? Perhaps the answer to this lies in this concept of a single unified soul, the Supreme Being. We have been told that Michael has completed his quest for experiential sovereignty, and, by virtue of expressing the seven-fold diversified wills of the existential deities, he has achieved the fullness of the potentials of supremacy. We have speculated further that entrance into the soul, and thereby, the Supreme oversoul, offers the potential for direct personality-to-personality communion—without the intercession of individualized “selves.” Is it then possible that, since the Supreme oversoul inhabits all of time/space and whose unity may well represent a common “self,” interaction between all persons who are self-consciously functioning in that realm is immediate and not subject to lower-level time/space considerations? If true, this would suggest that every personality who lives in and from the soul will become both increasingly real and present to all others as the Supreme develops.

3. Rule of Living and the Seven Psychic Circles. In doing the research, thinking, and discussion for this paper, we explored the possibility that the six levels of meaning Jesus outlined in his discourse on the “Rule of Living” on pages 1650-51 might well express the dynamic mind/soul progression necessary to complete the mastery of the seven psychic circles. This progression represents the spiritualization of the mind, the building of the soul, and would reflect the personality's raising of the seat of identity from the body through the mind to the soul. This approach, which we envision as seven concentric circles, might then be articulated as follows:

- **The seventh circle:** constitutes the differentiation of human from animal; full function of the seven mind adjutants.
- **The sixth circle:** equivalent to the experience of the self-identity as the body and senses;
- **The fifth circle:** suggests identification with the mind/body self, the self of feelings and emotions;
- **The fourth circle:** the level of the mind, the ego-self level of identity;
- **The third circle:** described as the level of brotherly love and would suggest the beginning level of the transition from mind-alone consciousness to mind/soul consciousness (it is interesting that a guardian seraphim is assigned here, ostensibly to protect the emerging soul);
- **The second circle:** the level of self-conscious morality, suggesting that the personality is living more and more from the soul;
- **The first circle:** the spiritual level, wherein the personality has “mastered” the ego-mind and has more or less fully raised the seat of identity to the soul, the arena in which the Adjuster lives and works and from which level the person can act in the world as God would act.

Consistent with this approach, we would suggest that wrong choosing by the ego-mind-self constitutes error and/or evil; wrong choosing by the soul-self directly (if possible), or by consciously allowing the ego-self to choose, constitutes sin, and if persistent, iniquity.

4. Parental Responsibility. Though we did not discuss it fully in the context of the paper, we would like to emphasize that this soul approach to personality relationships and community provides some insight on how we might better raise our children, and indeed, how we might view our responsibility to others generally. Specifically:

a. We are told that in order to experience God's love, we must love others (“Love cannot be self-bestowed,” etc.). Thus, one of our primary responsibilities, especially if we are to live from our souls, is to love others, and thereby to make them truly real in our experience and theirs. Two things happen if we do: first, we are validated by the love of God which we experience in the act of loving others; second, our loving of another person often facilitates the other person's loving us in return, an act which makes God's love real to them.

b. Our real job as parents is to provide the loving framework and the mindal stimulation to insure that a child begins to use the higher mind adjutants of worship and wisdom, accepts the gift of faith, makes his/her first moral choice to bring the Adjuster and initiate the soul, and is encouraged to nurture, become aware of, and experience his/her own soul. It might be also be said that one of our real responsibilities to other persons generally is to help them nurture and realize their own souls.

5. Doing God's Will. Though perhaps it is self-evident, we would like to underscore the sense that loving others from our souls is the doing of God's will. It is clear that our very

existence as self-conscious personalities is God's will and, simultaneously, is a revelation of his love. When we love another person unselfishly (that is, without consciousness of self), we validate that other person as real, of value, in

our experience. Consider that this single act thereby makes that person real in our souls, and thus more dimensionally real in the Supreme, real in the reality of time and space. Our will choice to love another then is the "doing" of God's will.

FACTORS IN THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE SOUL

UNIVERSAL FATHER
(Father of the Soul)

SUPREME BEING
(Mother of the Soul)

**Personality Fusion
with Thought Adjuster**

**THE FATHER'S LOVE EXPERIENCED
BY LOVING OTHERS**

QUALITATIVE SOUL GROWTH

**IMMORTAL SOUL
SPIRITUALIZED MIND**

QUANTITATIVE SOUL GROWTH

Faith Certainty

Personality Unity/Maturity

Father-Son Relationship

Cosmic Citizenship

MIND ARENA

Faith Experience

Experience of Making Self-
Conscious Moral Decisions
God-Judgment—Religious Choice
Social Judgment—Ethical Choice
Self-Judgment—Moral Choice

Growth in God-Consciousness

Seven Psychic Circle Growth

**SPIRITUAL, RELIGIOUS
DEVELOPMENT**

**PERSONALITY
DEVELOPMENT**

first faith experience

**THOUGHT ADJUSTER BESTOWED
THE SOUL IS BORN**

first moral choice

SPIRIT OF TRUTH

HOLY SPIRIT

Human life experience begins with encirclement of upper two adjutants
(worship and wisdom)

Personality/Will Begins to Function (Bestowal Instant Unknown)
Standing erect on two legs; use of language

Sub-human life experience managed by lower five adjutants
(intuition, understanding, courage, knowledge, counsel)

Material Birth

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 superhuman, 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" (UB1922:4). 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

to foster and further the supreme purpose of life, the development of a majestic and well-balanced personality." (p.2086) This can result in a superb self-image, the ultimate creative act. We as parents have to model this supernal self-image and self-esteem for it to transfer to our children.

In my opinion, a majestic and well-balanced personality can only be experienced by children and parents who have a self-image of themselves as spiritual personalities in the "living temple of spiritual fellowship," souls on their way to Paradise, Christian soldiers, members of the spiritual brotherhood in the kingdom of God. These are values that can transfer from parent to child. The child must "FEEL" this loyalty of the parent to the spiritual self-ideal over a long period of time, before it will become the child's self-image. The parent must be loyal to the children, and loyal to the Jesus-like ideal of family life.

Healthy ego-strength that psychologists speak of comes from just such a strong self-image with high positive self-worth and self-confidence. This confidence comes from the security a child feels when he or she knows love, and is secure in the arms of the spiritual Father as well as being secure within the parents' love.

We must make it a priority to train children to use their superconscious often and help them develop their majestic, well-balanced personality. 21st century soul-psychology is outlined in the Thought Adjuster section of *The Urantia Book*, and it has spiritual ramifications in child rearing. By studying this spiritual psychology, we can help release the creative potential in ourselves and our children. Soul-psychology does not focus on the past, but rather on the magnificent opportunities for the present and future development of our personalities, and of the beautiful nature of our pre-morontia souls.

JESUS AS OUR TEACHER AND PARENT MODEL

Jesus called his apostles his spiritual children in the spirit family of heaven. He used the earth family as an illustration of divine relationships. (p.1605) Often the apostles interpreted the meanings of Jesus' analogies literally, just as a child would. Jesus wanted to address the apostles as full grown men of the kingdom, but he said that he would bear with them patiently even to their earthly end, even if he had to continue to address them as children. Jesus is a model teacher of patience and forbearance, teaching the adult as patiently as the child. He used child type analogies to convey meanings even to adults. We learn from Jesus' example how to teach patiently to the spirit capacity and receptivity of any member of our family. Consider his method of teaching in parables.

As full grown members of the kingdom, with Jesus' help we can teach children the way children are best taught at certain ages. Being creative spiritual teachers of children means learning about good teaching methods, something many parents need to know.

We are all spiritual children in a spiritual family: we are all soul-children in a spiritual family. We all have very young souls. We must activate our own cosmic soul-child within us in order to become a model for our children. In this way they may develop a sense of their souls, so they can hear with the ear of their spirit. Jesus said we must become as a little child to gain entrance to the Father's kingdom—to know the Father-child relationship. (p.1585) By being around children and intimately interacting with them, parents can remain childlike and innocent and see God with the eyes of a child, the eyes of our trusting soul-child. Jesus wants us to identify ourselves, not as an ego-self, but as our soul self. (p.1229) I said to my son that God lives inside him. He responded quizzically, "Is he that small?"

He just experienced his 5th birthday and said he knew his Thought Adjuster had arrived months ago because, "He told me so."

CREATIVITY, THE PARENT AND THE CHILD

Inner creativity contributes to ennoblement of character through personality integration and selfhood unification. (p.1221)

I have two young school children and a 26-year-old daughter. I am a teacher of children, adults and seniors in the fine arts. I often give workshops in using art as therapy. I researched the creative process and how it can liberate one's spirit, heal and integrate a troubled personality, and help one to problem solve. I interact with many children and adults every day, creating art. I have to be creative everyday in teaching others how to be creative. I know my great frustration at not having time to create my own paintings, because of earthly duties to family and community.

Jesus too was frustrated in his artistic activities (p.1367) at an early age (9), forbidden by Jewish tradition to engage in the creation of imaginative art. Not to create artistically was one of his most trying adjustments as he complied with his parents' wishes. It appears that he sublimated his frustrated need to be artistically creative to everything else he did. He became a creative thinker, parent and teacher. Jesus exercised his creativity by blending the spiritual with the practical needs of his family. "He was an artist in the matter of adjusting his dedication to duty to his obligations of family loyalty and social service." (p.1384) These were *daily* adjustments of his between realms of loyalty to one's personal convictions and duty toward one's family. He blended this into a "masterful concept of group solidarity based upon loyalty, fairness, tolerance, and love." (p.1372) He was also accomplished at music, an art form that was allowed. His example of sublimated creative energy can be studied by all Urantian parents, especially fathers and fathers to be.

THE HEALING QUALITY OF CREATIVITY

"If freewill man is endowed with the powers of creativity in the inner man, then must we recognize that freewill creativity embraces the potential of freewill destructivity. And when creativity is turned to destructivity, you are face

to face with the devastation of evil and sin—oppression, war, and destruction. Evil is a *partiality of creativity* which tends toward disintegration and eventual destruction." "All conflict is evil in that it inhibits the creative function of the inner life—it is a species of civil war in the personality." (p.1220)

Allowing creativity to flow through you is a wonderful healing adventure to the body, mind, and spirit. Being creative integrates the personality. I have seen that if creativity is blocked in children, continuing neurosis can be the result. Let us help our children to be creative in all ways—even in their peer and social relationships. They can follow Jesus' youthful example. As a young man of 11 he shows the example of creating a boys' club, a "society for promoting the acquirements of manhood—physical, intellectual, and religious." (p.1368) These boys created new games and various methods of improved physical recreation. Many such groups exist today for children. Opportunities are there for service volunteers, male and female, married and single, adults and children. At 10 years Jesus and his friend were given clay by Nathan to "stimulate their creative imaginations by suggesting competitive efforts on modeling various objects and animals." (p.1364) Joseph left him blocks of wood and shavings in the corner of the workshop. (p.1361) Jesus at 6 was doing what all children naturally do, expressing himself with sand play and blocks. (p.1359) Today sand play is a technique used by art therapists to help children express themselves. Jesus was also reading Greek at 5 years.

Families today need to know how to play, work and worship together. Much of my continuing research on spiritually ideal, family lifestyles has its roots in Julia Fenderson's earlier works on parenting and child rearing. She once told me of the importance of having others continue her work in guiding parents into more spiritually fruitful family practices. Parents can learn much from her original papers which focus on Jesus' inspiring life, along with suggestions for training people for parenthood. Jesus is the ultimate role model of a creative parent, a creative father and brother (see Part 2 of this paper on Creative Fatherhood).

FAMILIES TODAY: WARNING FLAGS ARE UP

As a teacher in this last decade I know that in many classes there are over 50% single-parent children. I don't think society and the schools realize how dangerous this situation is to our culture. Basically it means that peer value systems dominate over mature adult value systems. Media violence, insipid role models of violent, Hollywood, cartoon characters, and Much Music clowns become adolescent and early childhood heroes. Up to the age of eight the human mind is a non-discrete sponge soaking up experience and information that will set the child's character for the rest of his or her life.

The Thought Adjuster comes into the child's mind at five. Then starts the soul's growth; the inner life of the child becomes the temple of God with all its magnificent poten-

tial. Children need an outside home-temple that reflects the beauty and intimacy of their inner temple. They need an outside stimulus of rich spiritual import to match the divine presence within. This is an important time and opportunity for the parent to become the spiritual teacher and model.

At its worst this early age of the child can be the beginning of many neurotic behaviors to compensate for the fear of the loss of love, the lack of approval (negative self-worth), the curtailment of creativity, or the loss of freedom to express their basic impulses in a safe environment.

HOME: THE PRIMARY SCHOOL OF VALUES, OF SPIRIT ATTUNEMENT, AND OF THE SELF-DISCIPLINED MIND

You cannot hear the spirit if your mind is overactive. Self-discipline of the mind is very important, and many people still think that a quiet mind invites the devil in to play. This attitude can be seen in the vehement uprising of parents when school teachers try to help children learn to visualize and use their imaginations in school curriculum like DUSO or Magic Circle's effective education programs. Public school systems with few exceptions are not allowed to attempt the moral, ethical or spiritual training of children, even though it can't be avoided. Not teaching is still teaching. Avoidance of moral and ethical training is exactly what is taught by school boards who model the avoidance of values education. This is not a criticism, but a fact of the state of education in North America. Parents cannot expect moral and religious training to be done by public school systems.

The place for mind-training and spirit-training is in the home and always will be. This idea is supported in the Urantia writings too, in the Government on a Neighboring Planet section. Here, in North America, moral and value education are found in some private and parochial schools. Moral and value education takes place over long, long periods of time, in which children continually test their teachers' and parents' values. Children test our loyalties to them, to our ideas, to our ideals, and to the family. For Urantia families and communities, the home is the school for teaching children spiritual values. Some far-seeing, spiritually conscious parents will sacrifice everything for their children's and grandchildren's spiritual welfare. Jesus did this with his family. Jesus was ultimately interested in the welfare of their souls.

Some educational-psychological research indicates that children grow up in recognized stages of intellectual, emotional, moral, and physical development. (Erikson, Piaget) See Addendum B. At each stage of development certain aspects of life can be taught to children and be understood by them. No amount of parental cajoling or preaching will reach a child whose mind is not biologically developed or ready to comprehend the morality lectures of the mother or father. Abstract concepts can begin to be understood at about nine years old. Many parents continue to mistakenly expect adult understanding and behavior

from their young children. Parents must match their teaching style to the age and temperament of each of their children, just as Jesus did. The establishment of parental authority, along with family meetings and family consensus go far in adjusting everyone's understanding of family members and their inherent capacities for material, mental and spiritual growth.

Ways must be found within the home to early discipline children like Jesus did, where discipline was always a creative opportunity to teach a better method of behavior. Dr. Wayne Dyer lists some ways (see Addendum D) in which parents can give their children the gift of creativity, in reality awaken and encourage their inherent creative natures. He reminds us that we are the temporal creators of our children's self-image. And it is our children's spiritual self-image that we as believers of the Urantia Papers should be most concerned with.

EDUCATING CHILDREN TO LOVE SOLITUDE AND A QUIET MIND

"In stillness we will hear God's Voice today without intrusions of our petty thoughts, without our personal desires, and without all judgment of His holy Word... Today we will not listen to the world, but wait in silence for the Word of God." (p.220, *A Course in Miracles*)

Children must be surrounded by environments of rich, religious resources, and at the same time learn how to be still, to quiet themselves and to cultivate a love of solitude, much like young Jesus did. This will enable them to become more attuned to their best friend, God, who lives in their mind, and Jesus' Spirit of Truth who lives in their hearts. Tell children stories of Jesus being alone and talking to God, his Father.

The child's best friend is within. Through becoming their own best friend, children will acquaint themselves with the real Best Friend—the God Presence inside them. We can help our children to find this "inner friend by cultivating the love of solitude." (p.196, *Vissel*)

Overstimulation of children by media and school, too much pre-school education, and other mind-occupying activities sets up a pattern for the rest of their lives that is very difficult to break. This is the pattern of always needing outside stimulation, and the need for constant socialization. Children who are never given the opportunity nor the environment to be quiet and reflective can have great difficulty tuning into their spirit. Teaching our children to be alone and to quiet their minds is imperative for the development of spiritual perception. Be still and quiet, relax and be at attention were the teachings of Jesus. "Worship is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, a form of restful spiritual exertion." (p.1616)

MEDITATING WITH THE KIDS

The commitment a parent makes to seek God's Presence within is indeed a major commitment and is perhaps the greatest gift we can give ourselves and our child.

Jesus from an early age (11) was given to long seasons of profound meditation, which means he must have started meditating and worshipping at a much earlier age. (p.1371) It follows, then, that children, throughout most stages of their development, can be taught methods of spiritual perception. Simple meditation is easily understood, because of the younger child's naturally active imagination. The Vissells write that,

"...meditating with children can be a very powerful and wonderful experience. Children of all ages love to use their imaginations and have a great ability to visualize. If meditation is introduced as a wonderful game and adventure, children will respond with joy." (p.180)

Guided meditations are especially enjoyed by children. Here is a sample itinerary that you can embellish: Imagine you meet your shining guardian angel in a lovely meadow, and she takes you on a special journey to a beautiful castle where you both meet the Master. Let the children add to the meditation here. Then ask them what they see and hear Jesus say. Children can also make up their own meditations. The goal of meditation is to be open to the inner voice of God—our Thought Adjusters.

Zen or quiet mind meditations can also be developed in young children. At times leave the noise of the city, take the children to the wilderness, sit in the forest or by a river, and silently meditate and worship with the whole family. Then share the experience, tell each other what was heard; what the spirit voices of nature said, and what the inner voice said to each of you. When you return home, draw and paint the imagery that comes to you. At the lower levels of circle attainment our Thought Adjuster communicates to us in pictures and symbolism. (pp.1207-08, 1223)

THE BATTLE FOR THE MINDS OF OUR CHILDREN

The real warfare on the planet is not the military power plays seen on the TV news, but the power plays seen in commercials and the glorification of violence. Something evil is reaching for the possession and manipulation of the minds of the populace; I do not believe it is only the result of ignorant human marketing practices. On one side of the battle line are the materialistic manipulators of the media and their sponsors, material and spiritual. On the other side of the battle line are the governing spiritual personalities of Urantia, the angelic government, council of Urantia, and other spiritual personalities who offer a different kind of power-play-of-life to those souls who learn to tune into their inner spiritual broadcasts. If we are tuned in to our inner channels of spiritual communication, then, we will be better able to help children of this generation to look, listen, speak and act in unison with our spiritual community on Urantia. They will not be so susceptible to the hypnotic effect of slick media.

In a spiritual home environment rich in visual and musical stimuli, the children's community of angels and spiritual

guides will become more real and more important. These children will more likely gravitate toward other earthly communities of like-minded spiritual families for the rest of their lives.

Give names to all your family's angels, draw eight-foot pictures of them and hang them on each bedroom door. I asked my children what their angels' names were and each of them responded with a double name, Autumn's "Beautiful-Wonder," and Eden's "Tommy-Jack." Use the name of Jesus in every conversation, sing praise, meditate and worship together often, every day if possible. Draw pictures of spiritual importance, surround your children with beauty, walk in raw unpolluted nature, be good to your children, enjoy them in their play.

Play with them inventing spiritual games, praise them and encourage them when they create their own prayer forms, help them develop their personal relationship with God, by making Him a real partner in all your lives. Jesus tried to get his family to create their own prayer forms. Unconditionally accept children's spiritual visions; Eden, my 5-year-old son, said with great conviction, that when Jesus came back to earth after he died, he didn't have a beard. Autumn, 6, wrote the following prayer, and practices her reading with it:

"Thank you, God, for giving us all the things you give us, and all the sheep. And you give us the whole universe. Thank you, God, for Jesus; thank you, God, for God."

Eden's prayer is:

"Thank you, God, for all the animals, all the people in the world, for all the spirits, and for our souls."

He saw his angels doing cartwheels on their wings.

SPIRITUAL GAMES

Make them up! It's fun to exercise your divine right to be creative. Take a lesson from other cultures. Create little Hindu-Buddhist-like altars in each of the children's rooms. Let each child create his or her own altar the way they want to create it. Cultivate the joy of alone-time in children so that they can go to their altar and best friend, God, inside them, when they may be troubled and need to. Let your children see your light shining from you after your meditation and worship sessions. Set the example for them.

Experience the better side of this imperfect part of Paradise and God's creation, right here and now, and be creative with Him. Visualization and drama can be used to develop spiritual perception in young children and in teens. An Ontario Urantia community creates an annual Resurrection puppet show, in which all the children make the puppets and play the parts. The scared soldiers are always the hit. Creating spiritual music and song stimulates the spirit and joins family to community. Telling parables and making up parables, creating spiritual billboards at home, illustrating these parables or the fruits of the spirit, showing family examples of some of the fruits, are some artistic

methods of focusing the children's attention on spiritual life.

Create new parables together. Let the kids create the ends of sentences when you tell them Jesus stories. Make up Jesus stories by embellishing those in *The Urantia Book*; e.g., What happened when Jesus was in the garden and milking the goats? Make him real, let them guess, and accept their ideas about Jesus without judgment or correction. Then continue to build the story from their ideas. For example:

Parent: "When Jesus stuck his shovel in the garden he dug up a (Pause)....."

Child's response: "Easter egg!"

Parent: "Yes, he dug up an Easter egg, many eggs, and he took them to his mother and Jesus shouted (pause)..."

Child: "Look Mom, can we color them?" Etc.

Create new spiritual rituals together, new musical instruments to play while singing with the angels. Thomas, an Idaho Urantia Book reader, father, carpenter, musician, says that music gets his family out of their thinking hemisphere and into their creative-musical hemisphere, which he feels is more loving. Now his family plays music for community events. Do something — anything — creative together as a family.

Remember, your Thought Adjuster or Thought Controller is a perfect part of a perfect Creator Father. Remember His injunction to the universes, "Be you perfect, even as I am perfect." (p.21) Surrender to His will, let go and let God, and you may just experience some form of His creative perfection in your lives, in your children's lives and in your relationships with them. At this stage of our spiritual development the perfection we experience lies more in our intent, in our motivation to do His creative will. Do not be discouraged when you fail to realize some apparent imperfection in your parental behavior. Just keep exercising your inner spiritual creativity and keep trying from your soul. Self-perfection is a matter of your mind-will focus.

At five the Thought Adjuster comes; why not throw a party and invite the children's friends to rejoice in this mighty occasion? See the loving and the lovable and the Thought Adjuster in your children and in yourselves; know that when your will and God's will and purpose are at one, then the love you feel for your children and from them is His love. That love now flows freely through your soul to others in family and community, to the Divinity inside them. Love is the creative energy for the building of the living temple of spiritual fellowship. Let the children know that they are in the kingdom of heaven in your home, that they are part of the Supreme Being, the loving relationship of all people.

Listen to the children, they will teach you how to teach them. They will show you how to instantly forgive and make up, so that we all can get on playing at life together. They will reward you for your efforts, because they will teach you how to see with the eye of spiritual faith, remind

you to listen with the ear of the spirit, and speak the language of the spirit, while you all grow up in spirit perception. 4-year-old Eden says good night to the Holy Mother Spirit, the Mother of the angels. Then he whispers to me,

"You can't see the angels, because they are like Pete's Dragon. If you're a good guy, then she comes out—if you are not, then she doesn't come out. She is invisible."

Creatively use your inner mind to create an inner world of God's love in you and your children, supported by an outer world of parental-grandparental love.

"Let your children see that there is love for them. Children must see how their parents love them. Especially let the children see how their parents love one another."

—Mother Theresa

PART 2 TOPICAL STUDY:

FATHERHOOD THE BEATITUDES: THE FOUR SUPREME REACTIONS OF FATHERLY LOVE PP. 1573-1575

The family is the fundamental unit of fraternity in which parents and children learn those lessons of patience, altruism, tolerance and forbearance which are so essential to the realization of brotherhood among all men." (p.941)

Parents can study Jesus' beatitudes for more information about some of the tougher duties of parenthood (pp.1573-75) and Jesus' seven facts which are the foundation of a true family. (p.1603) See Addendum C.

JESUS AS A CREATIVE PARENTAL ROLE MODEL: AS FATHER AND BROTHER

Families today need to know how to play, work and worship together. Much of my continuing research on spiritually ideal family lifestyles has its roots in Julia Fender-son's earlier works on parenting and child rearing. She once told me of the importance of having others continue her work in guiding parents into more spiritually fruitful family practices. Parents can learn much from her original papers which focus on Jesus' inspiring life, along with suggestions for training people for parenthood.

The ultimate role model for family life as a father and creative brother is that of Jesus. There are a multitude of references to Jesus and his relationship with his family in the Urantia Papers. Besides providing for their financial welfare Jesus took a keen, personal interest in the spiritual welfare of every one of his brothers and sisters. (p.1419) See Addendum A for the "Perfect Parent Checklist," an outline of Jesus' personality traits for parents striving to grow in spirit perception.

Of course, as a parental model Jesus' bottom line was following the will of the Father. Jesus knew God never left his children, so naturally his fatherly example centered on his obligation of watchcare and support for his family. They came before all other duties. Urantia fathers must understand the importance of Jesus' example of relinquishing his personal desires for his duty to his family; his loss of self; his example of other-mindedness.

Even later the apostles and disciples became Jesus' family and the organization was run on family rules. His gospel was based on family, family of God, family of Man, and the concept of the brotherhood of man. (p.1603) Parents must study Jesus' example and apply it to their family, to the spiritual growth of each member. The following are a few examples of Jesus' problem solving skills as a creative parent.

- Coping with family poverty: p.1392
- Keen business judgment and financial sagacity: pp. 1389-1398
- Formulating spontaneous prayers: p. 1389
- A father at 14 and in contact with his Thought Adjuster
- Musical skills: p. 1388
- Gardening with the family and raising animals: p. 1393
- Positive injunctions to do good, not to forbid doing evil. Commanding the performance of good: p. 1401
- Family prayer time, an opportunity to discuss everything and anything related to the welfare of the family: p. 1401
- Wise discipline. Punishment assented to by the one punished and agreed upon by all members of the family: p.1401
- Plan for the achievement of a higher goal of (spiritual) idealism while toiling for the immediate goals of necessity: p. 1405
- Periodic family conferences: p. 1410
- Making family legal contracts with his earth brother: p.1418
- A wise parent never takes sides in the petty quarrels of his own children: p. 1589
- The seven facts of foundation of a true family: p. 1603

Jesus did not perform miracles with his earthly family or his immediate followers. (p.1605) Why do Christians expect miracles?

Jesus was wholly concerned with that inward and spiritual fellowship with God the Father. (p.1862) We as parents must also develop that fellowship with our children and those in our care, whether they be children, adults or seniors. We Urantia parents can strive to be Jesus' parental model for his kingdom family. We are all children at heart and cosmic children in the great universe ascendant adventure. Fellowship with God the Father "certainly and directly manifests itself as outward and loving service for man. He taught that the religion of the kingdom is a genuine personal experience which no man can contain within himself; that the consciousness of being a member of the

family of believers leads inevitably to the practice of the precepts of the family conduct, the service of one's brothers and sisters in the effort to enhance and enlarge the brotherhood." (p.1862)

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ADDENDUM A

PERFECT PARENT CHECKLIST

Are you striving toward Jesus' perfect ideals of parenthood? If in doubt about your progress, why not consult this checklist:

JESUS WAS ALWAYS:

- Unfailingly kind
- Sincere
- Free from affectation
- Refreshingly genuine
- Unquestionably loyal to all truth
- Reasonable
- Approachable
- Practical
- Surcharged with divine enthusiasm
- Imaginative
- Courageous
- Prudent
- Sympathetic
- Unique
- Pious
- Trustful
- Immune to disappointment
- Impervious to persecution
- Untouched by apparent failure
- Unusually cheerful
- Touchingly considerate
- Generous
- Candid but always kind
- Amazingly frank
- Unerringly fair—even in the face of injustice

- Gladsome and humble
- Patient
- Sublimely composed
- Indignant at evil
- Intolerant of sin
- Conscious of presence of God
- Profoundly confident in the universe
- Devoid of fear and anxiety
- Cordial but unaffected
- Manly and decisive
- Wise and efficient in administration
- Carefree and happy
- Hungry for knowledge
- Saving but generous
- Realistic
- Methodical and systematic
- Understanding and sympathetic
- Merciful
- Keenly observant
- Gracious and friendly
- A great story teller
- A master of men
- Able to avoid distracting details
- A charming listener

- Positive—he exalted good by commanding its performance
- Lucidly logical
- A model of sanity
- A master of delegation
- Perfect in his youth
- Immune to disappointment
- Unselfish
- Subject to will of the Father in heaven
- Liberal
- Sublimely tolerant
- Fearless
- Gracious and charming
- Methodical and systematic in everything he did
- Ready to share
- Self-controlled
- Interested and a keen observer
- Original

- Dull or prosaic
- Reckless
- Cowardly
- Bound by tradition
- Handicapped by enslavement to narrow conventionality
- Narrow-minded
- Sentimental
- Sanctimonious
- Presumptuous
- A blind or unreasoning optimist
- Wasteful or extravagant
- Influenced by praise
- Angry with sinner
- Audacious
- Dictatorial
- Discouraged
- Negative
- Disturbed seriously by doubts, fears or skepticism
- Superstitious

JESUS WAS NEVER:

- Hypocritical
- Freakish
- Erratic or eccentric
- Capricious, whimsical or hysterical

JESUS NEVER (OR SELDOM):

- Offered advice unless asked for
- Resorted to shamming
- Stooped to pretense

- Took advantage of human mind
- Compromised with evil
- Paid attention to public opinion
- Wasted time on trifles
- Hesitated to correct erroneous beliefs
- Indulged in pity
- Let familiarity breed indifference
- Indulged in self-pity or increased it in others
- Engaged in meddlesome probing of souls of associates
- Hesitated to be severe when occasion demanded such discipline

- Threatened tormentors
- Stooped to ignoble tactics

JESUS ALWAYS:

- Attacked problems as he found them
- Mobilized all powers of mind, soul and body on the task at hand
- Took responsibility
- Handled disappointment
- Made plans for distant goal
- Took time to comfort
- Put men at ease
- Spread good cheer
- Loved much and wisely

- Aimed at superb self-respect
- Inspired others with hope and confidence

JESUS ALWAYS HAD:

- Sanctified common sense
- Exquisite discrimination
- Extraordinary sense of propriety
- Amazing frankness
- Sublime composure
- Supreme and unquestioned trust in God
- All encompassing faith
- Profound confidence in universe

- Well-regulated management of home life
- Much faith and looked for good in his children
- Sublime tolerance
- Lucid logic
- Exquisite discrimination
- Sense of humor, made children laugh heartily
- Respect from even his enemies
- Confidence and authority
- Broad outlook
- Great powers of concentration

ADDENDUM B
(See chart on page 29.)

ADDENDUM C
PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE DERIVED FROM THE BEATITUDES
AND THE SEVEN FACTS OF A TRUE FAMILY (p.1603)

Jesus, of course, was using the Father-parent analogy to create a new picture for future generations (ours) who would understand the God-the-Father-Creator relationship to His creature children. However, today, many mothers now assume the 'only-parent' role in the shattered family, and men who are tragically absent from the family need to awaken to the true parent image. We have, therefore, taken the liberty to edit Christ's statement so that this lesson applies to men and women who are parents. To further transform this lesson-in-parenting into a more personal form, the following questionnaire was designed by readers from Kingston, Ontario for parents on Urantia.

**THE SEVEN FACTS OF A TRUE FAMILY:
ITS FOUNDATION**

1. The Fact of Existence.
 - a. What parental traits (biological, psychological, spiritual) have your children inherited from you? From father? From mother?
 - b. Can you describe each of your children's personalities?
 - c. How would you describe your father-child relationship? Mother-child relationship?
2. Security and Pleasure.
 - a. What needs of your children have you as a father or a mother taken great pleasure in supplying lately?
 - b. What provisions for each of your children's pleasure have you enjoyed making lately?
3. Education and Training.
 - a. Describe your wise and careful plan for:

- (1) your children's education.
 - (2) your son's or your daughter's training.
- b. What later life greater responsibilities are you preparing your children for? Name each responsibility and indicate your method(s) of preparation.
4. Discipline and Restraint.
 - a. What are your farseeing provisions for the following:
 - (1) discipline: physical, mental, spiritual.
 - (2) guidance: parental, familial, peer, mentor.
 - (3) correction: consequences for specific behaviors.
 - (4) restraint: by self, family, parent, or others.
 5. Companionship and Loyalty.
 - a. How do you affectionately hold intimate and loving intercourse with your children?
 - b. Are you *always* open to your children's petitions?
 - c. Do you share each of their hardships and assist them over their difficulties?

d. How would you describe your supreme interest in the progressive welfare of your children and grandchildren? What have you done to provide for their happiness, good fortune, well-being and prosperity?

6. Love and Mercy.

a. Do you freely forgive your children and exercise compassion; are you sympathetic towards their distress and do you desire to alleviate it?

b. Do you hold vengeful memories against your children for any length of time?

c. Do you judge your children; are you an enemy to any of them at any time, in their eyes?

d. Do you act like a creditor? Under what circumstances?

e. Can you give an example of a time recently when you were real with your children and exercised:

(1) Tolerance.

(2) Patience.

(3) Forgiveness.

7. Provisions for the Future.

a. Describe your sons' inheritances, your daughters' inheritances; your grandchildren's inheritances.

b. Describe your plans and projections for your family's continuity after your death as parents.

c. Do your children believe and trust that you will be there for them in all of this life; that your loyalty and love is ever true?

This was our Master's model of our Paradise Father's actual living relationship with all of us as His unique and individual children. As Jesus discussed this with his apostles, we as parents can discuss the applications of these same features of family life with our children. We can make very clear to each other our specific goals, objectives and plans to develop a strong foundation for our family life.

Parents can discuss these Seven Facts of Family at monthly

family meetings and do some consensus planning. You could also discuss the application of these features of a true family to each of your relationships with God.

PARENTAL TRAITS GLEANED FROM THE BEATITUDES (p.1570)

- Males must not be taught to be calloused or cynical.
- Kindness and sympathy are qualities modeled by the father, as well as meekness, mournfulness in sympathy to the losses of others.
- Parents are sensitive and responsive to the needs of others.
- Curtail destructive criticisms, which teach children how to internalize negative emotions and create poor self-image.
- Provide for family pleasures.
- Provide for the family's present and future security.
- Be a loyal companion, not an absent father.
- Correct any duality in treatment of the different sexes of your children. Be forgiving freely and a loving disciplinarian.

CHILDREN'S TRAITS

- Encourage a child's natural positive self-image and self-esteem.
- Learn to suppress immediate gratification.
- Early learn to sacrifice.
- Naturally function as peacemakers.
- Respond to the challenge of courage.
- Encourage and augment the child's natural urge to relieve suffering.
- Teach them to express emotions without expectation of reward; to project the future consequences of expressing immediate feelings or emotions, which may at the time, be inappropriate.

ADDENDUM D

DR. WAYNE DYER

From the article, "Give Your Kids the Gift of Creativity."

You as parents first of all are the creator of your child's self-image. As parents our primary concern is to focus on what our children think of themselves, rather than attempting to shape their attitudes towards other people, things, and events. This is what determines our success and happiness in life. The child's positive self-portrait is a direct result of the kind of reinforcements they receive from you on a daily basis.

1. Encourage children to be risk takers.

- to gain a sense of accomplishment.
- to try new things and not to be afraid of failure.
- praise them for attempting new projects, "You're fantastic."

2. Discourage children from all self put-downs.

- respond with positive reinforcement when they do.
 - use simple direct positive self-esteem statements that counteract the negative statements. They will internalize them.
- #### 3. Encourage children to be honest with themselves.
- place a premium on honesty at all times.
 - when honest with himself, he/she will develop self-esteem.
 - most of all that means that you have to set the example of honest behavior and not lie, which is a reflection of low self-regard.
 - create a truthful environment in your home.
- #### 4. Be aware of the importance of appearance to young people.

- run a mile a day with the kids to get them on a program of exercise.
 - refuse to buy junk food if the children have a weight or complexion problem.
 - show by example that you want them to think of themselves as attractive and healthy.
5. Hold them and kiss them, be physical with them.
- touching and holding children is crucial in the development of a child's self-image.
 - tell them that you love them every day.
 - soon they will love themselves if you hug and kiss and demonstrate that they are really terrific.
 - you are sending important messages about their own value.
 - they will love themselves as you love them, even if your love is God-like, as God loves them.
6. Listen to your children carefully.
- be attentive and honest with them at all times.
 - this is the cornerstone of an honest and respectful attitude towards themselves.
 - ask about their school, friends, and activities each day. They will think that they are significant people.
7. Be involved in their activities (age related).
- throw balls with them, all kinds of balls.
 - play with them always, at all ages.
 - attend their functions. Get excited about their activities.
 - when children see you care they feel more important, and that is what a healthy self-image is based on.
8. Encourage them to have their friends hang out at home.
- show them their friends are welcome and that you see them as important too.
 - the message the child receives is that you trust their judgment, that if they like their friends, that is good enough for you.
 - this tells the child that you believe in them and therefore they will believe in themselves.
9. Read aloud to them at all ages.
- give them your most precious commodity, your TIME.
 - share your favorite stories with them.
 - tell them what happened to you as a baby, and tell them how wonderful they were as a baby.
 - all attention of this kind is a self-image booster.
10. Be supportive of their attempts to be independent, self-reliant.
- encourage them to take jobs after school, earn an allowance, choose their own meals, decorate their rooms, anything that gives them a sense of independence and belonging.
 - budget their own money, select well-made clothes, cook, clean, care for their own belongings, schedule their time for work and leisure, be courteous with thank you notes and gifts for others, eat a balanced diet, get sufficient sleep.

CREATIVITY IN CHILDREN

All children are creative. We encourage or discourage that natural creativity by the way we relate to our children. Raise them to be as creative as they can be.

Creativity is an approach to life, it is an attitude that leads one to more and more personal fulfillment. It allows us to apply our own special selves to all of life's undertakings.

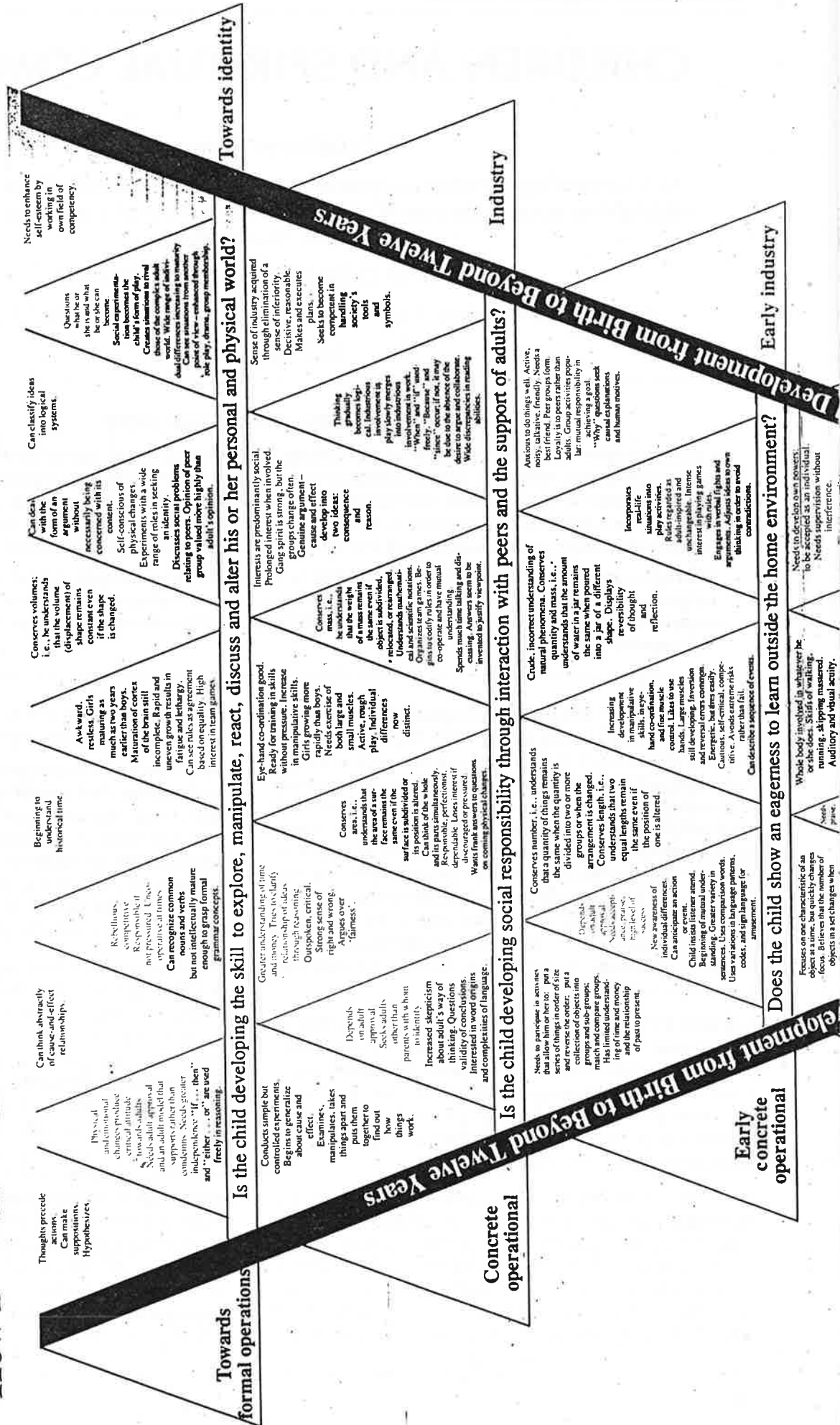
Creative children's personalities can be identified by the following attributes:

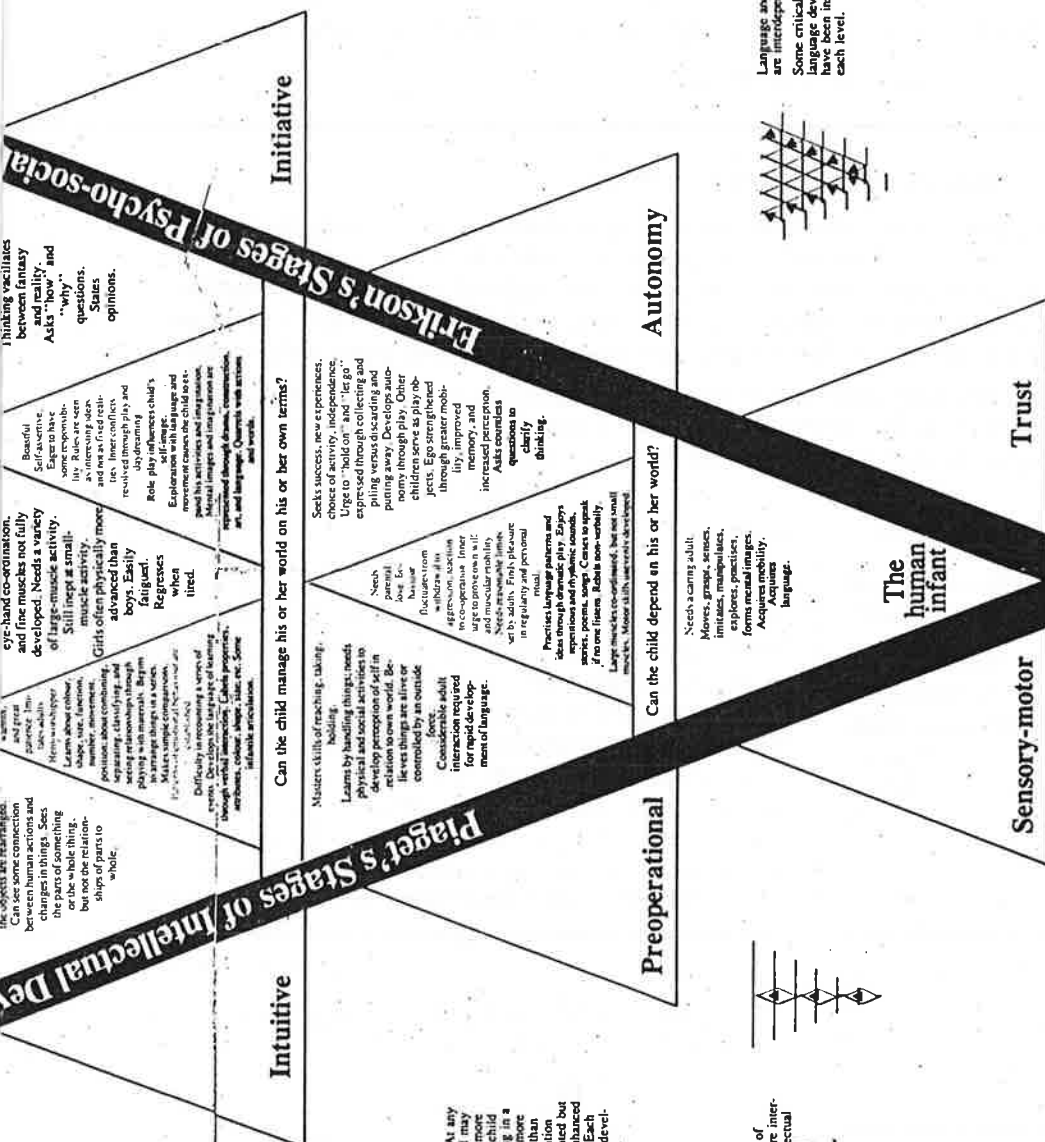
- love to play and invent new games.
- make up new rules.
- invent new characters for everyone to assume.
- ask questions about everything, curiosity has no boundaries, are interested in everything, do not fear the unknown.
- spontaneous, inventing new ways to have fun.
- play with everything in sight; tin cans, garden hose, etc.
- entertain themselves.
- don't need expensive toys.
- confident within themselves of a positive outcome.
- take risks without fear of failure.
- trust themselves, they know that they can do whatever they attempt; e.g., jump off 10-meter diving board.
- creative children want to go, they are not spectators.
- while they are waiting they are inventing new games.
- prefer to work and play alone.
- are sometimes labeled loners, underachievers (if not challenged), and troublemakers, always by non-creative people.
- they love books, and have varied interests.
- love to sing and dance and mimic in even their pre-toddler stage.
- love puzzles, blocks, mazes, challenging toys which make their minds work.
- draw their own pictures, invent stories.
- work creatively with glue, paste, scraps of paper.
- wear their emotions right on their faces; sensitive and unwilling to be phoney about how they feel.
- quick to show their anger and equally quick to show their love. One minute hugging, the next screaming.
- creative with food and cooking.
- have a great sense of real humor, not negative. Help others laugh.
- love competition.
- love themselves as they are, not self-critical.
- love the challenge of self-improvement.
- know that their self-value comes from the quality and content of their actions and character.
- enjoy solitary entertainments such as reading, jogging, learning to play a new instrument, even though social and gregarious.

ADDENDUM B DEVELOPMENTAL GROWTH CHART OF CHILDREN RE: ERIKSON AND PIAGET

FROM THE ONTARIO BOARD OF EDUCATION stages of the development of a child chart

How Does the School Provide for the Widening Range of Individual Differences?





Intuitive

Thinking vacillates between fantasy and reality. Asks "why" and "how" questions. Shows opinions.

Preoperational

eye-hand co-ordination, and fine muscles not fully developed. Needs a variety of large-muscle activity. Still in early muscle activity. Girls often physically more advanced than boys. Easily fatigued. Role play begins. Role play is imitative. Role play is dramatic. Role play influences child's self-concept. Explorations in language and movement cause the child to expand his activities and imagination. Imagery and imagination are important in this stage. Role play is important in this stage.

Sensory-motor

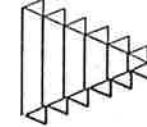
eye-hand co-ordination, and fine muscles not fully developed. Needs a variety of large-muscle activity. Still in early muscle activity. Girls often physically more advanced than boys. Easily fatigued. Role play begins. Role play is imitative. Role play is dramatic. Role play influences child's self-concept. Explorations in language and movement cause the child to expand his activities and imagination. Imagery and imagination are important in this stage. Role play is important in this stage.

Initiative

Autonomy

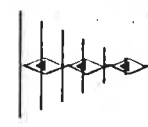
Trust

Ascending stage: At any given age, children may be functioning in more than one stage. A child may be functioning in a specific stage for more than three or less than two years. Maturation cannot be accelerated but can be delayed. A child's behaviour and needs at each level. A positive answer to each key question indicates a child's transition to each



Key to intellectual and physical stages

Piagetian stages of intellectual development. Each stage is an outgrowth of the previous stage.



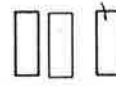
Significant stages of physical growth are inter-related with intellectual and psycho-social development.

Colour Code

Red - Piaget's stages of intellectual development

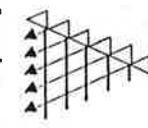
Green - Erikson's stages of psycho-social development

Black - Significance of language in social development

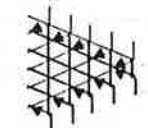


Key to language and psycho-social stages

Erikson's stages of psycho-social development. Each stage is an outgrowth of the previous stage.



Language and learning are interdependent. Some critical stages in language development have been inserted at each level.



The Complexities of Childhood

This chart was prepared by Miss Mary Taylor, Miss Clare McIntyre, and Mr. Murray Phelan, Ministry of Education, Ontario.

Ministry of Education Ontario Hon. Thomas L. Wells Minister of Education

Further information may be found in the following:
Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1963.
Ginsberg, Herbert, and Oppen, Sylvia. *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
Matur, H. W. *Three Theories of Child Development*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

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FACTORS WHICH ARE PART OF COMMUNITY FOR CHILDREN IN GENERAL WHICH MIGHT TRANSFER TO SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY FOR CHILDREN

RITUALS

FIRE

The first thing which I found held these young children spellbound as we sat together in the front lawn was FIRE. "Fire was mixed up with magic in the minds of primitive fear-ridden mortals." "Some tribes worshiped fire as a deity itself; others revered it as the family symbol of the purifying and purging spirit of their venerated deities. Vestal virgins were charged with the duty of watching sacred fires, and in the twentieth century candles still burn as a part of the ritual of many religious services." (p.947C) So here we are fitting right in with magic and "primitive minds," and even fear. We lit a candle and very, very carefully passed it around as each child who wanted to said, "Thank you, God" (for something in his/her life). This was the beginning of a ceremony which was just repeated last year at the Jesus' birthday celebration with several teenagers and a little one held in its father's lap. This little "Thank you, God" ceremony has evolved of course and I will share with you some of the other things which seem to have enough meaning to the kids to have continued to be incorporated year after year. But, you have to have fire, whether it is a candle on the table at dinner, a candle passed around by the children, or carried by the children to an altar or special place.

TEMPLE BUILDING

The other thing which evolved was the building of a "temple." Children and building forts in special places is well known. And it had to happen here in the religious sense. Most of the time of our "ceremonies" were spent in building the temple and getting ready for our "Thank you, God" ceremony. The building of the temple was done with great care, experimenting, talking, and some arguing. All we needed to build a temple were some fairly big pieces of material, pretty if possible, some big pins (we used diaper pins, for those were available) and clothespins. (I think at one time we even "und diapered" a toddler in order to get a necessary pin.) The kids helped pin and tie the material to bushes and trees; we put some material and other little "totems" on the floor, our candle in the middle and sat in a circle.

FOOD

Snacks quickly became incorporated into the ceremony. We tried to have special things—little, tasty, pretty goodies which we could eat after we said, "Thank you, God." As there were always the more adventurous ones who showed how brave they were by putting their fingers through the candle as it went around, there were the hungry, eager ones who stuck their fingers into the cupcakes, or tried to get a

crumb before everyone else. Part of learning to function as a group (a community) is to wait for the group to do something together and then to choose to participate or to contribute. This learning comes hard for some two or three year olds, as it does for some 40 and 50 year olds.

SINGING/MUSIC

Fortunately we had some people in The Family of God Foundation with wonderful voices and musical ability and they would sometimes join us and sing with the kids. But if it was just myself and the kids, with my musical abilities, we were lucky to sing Jesus Loves Me, which we did regularly, only we changed it: "Jesus loves me, this I know; for the MASTER (not Bible) tells me so." And the rest of it is as you remember it.

CLEAN UP

This was where the sense of community responsibility came into play with these young ones. We all took turns in the important event of blowing out the candle, helping to take down the temple, collecting the clothespins, and putting it all back (and rediapering the toddler). This was usually a fun, free time, rolling around in what was left of the temple and inventing games with the clothespins and forming the soft wax of the candle into things.

Now, I would like to jump ahead about 15 or so years: last year at the Jesus' birthday celebration in Golden Gate Park, sponsored by Golden Gate Circle of students of *The Urantia Book*, there were about 12 children of many ages who built a temple, with the addition of balloons, streamers, poles, and rugs to sit on. We sat inside with several candles and a large birthday cake for Jesus. The adults were about 1/2 block away in a large circle holding communion and worshipping. As soon as we finished our ceremony with the candle, saying "Thank you, God", and cutting and eating the cake, we began to plan what we were going to do for the adults. I am sure the angels had directed me to a garage sale where I bought a full bolt of beautiful golden 60" wide material. It is at least 1/2 block long. The kids planned which rhythm instrument they wanted; who wanted to sprinkle the flower petals, who wanted to lead the "parade," who wanted to squirt the good smelling water on the heads of the adults, and who would carry the gigantic pumpkin in honor of harvest (you use what's available). Then we quietly snuck out of the temple, leaving it in total disarray. The kids held sides of the beautiful material and set up a rhythm with their instruments. I walked ahead playing an Ocarina (the only thing I know how to play and then only one song). When we got to the adult circle the children encircled the gold material around the backs of the adults sitting on the ground, enclosing them in an exquisite symbolic golden circle; some of the children threw the flower petals over their heads; others sprinkled water and still others went inside the circle and gave flowers to each adult. The pumpkin ended up in the middle and the children went and sat by their parents. It was magical and meaningful.

I am not sharing this to start a cult or to say how ceremonies and rituals have to be done. I am sharing this as an example of how rituals and ceremonies can be developed at the level of the children, with their input and can be allowed to expand, with adult guidance and organizational skills. They love it. It is a process and an attitude on the part of the adults which frees the children to do it their way, which can be beautiful, exciting, and full of spirit.

Before I go onto another factor of community for children, I would like to share one more ritual which has provided a certain feeling of community and depth of ceremonial experience at our center. We always have rats—yes, rats—those little furry cute things with wiggly noses, long whiskers, and ugly, horrible long tails. They do make wonderful, holdable pets, but one of the more valuable aspects of them is that their life span is not too long—about 3 years for most. This means that in a three-year span children can see them mate, have babies, raise them, holding them, loving them; and then in the end walk quietly and respectfully past a cage that has a hand made sign: "Please be quiet. This rat needs to die in peace." We have lost count of the number of our rats that have "gone on" (and this has been speculated on much by the children). We have had circles where the rat who has just died and is still warm is passed around very gently and reverently from hand to hand as they say their last good byes. A kindergartner can be sitting next to a 6th grader as they engage in this almost sacred ceremony. For some children, this is the first time they have encountered death, and it is awesome to see something very precious that was moving around and eating yesterday, be so still today. I have stood back and watched over the years what the children do with this situation when they are faced with death and grief; and children being very practical little beings inevitably ask, "What do we do with it now?" They know they have to bury it. So they get shovels and start digging. We actually have kind of a "rat graveyard" and some of the kids who have been there 4 or 5 years can point out where various ones are buried. I remember one group who dug for almost a whole day because the ground was so hard, but they finally gathered around a little mound with a cross on top, flowers from our garden, and a sign: "Here lies Smokey our hamster. Death by choking." They figured it was choking because he was found with his mouth open in the morning. I do not give input on the ceremonies, but I help them do whatever they need and want to do. They have archetypal concepts of what is needed. The kids have always put it in a box with beautiful material; dug a hole; put flowers on the box before the dirt; the cross comes from somewhere; then there must be flowers and a sign.

I remember the very first ceremony for the grandfather of all rats—MacRat, who died of old age. He was a special rat because he lost most of his tail when the kids were erecting a block building and his tail got under a block and was stepped on by a kid. Anyway he had half a tail, which increased their feeling of compassion. They not only did

all of the usual ceremonial things I have mentioned, but they got a teacher who could play a guitar, asked her to compose a song for MacRat, sat in a circle, some crying while the song was sung; they sat for many minutes of quiet remembering MacRat; then each got up and threw some dirt on the box in the hole and then it got covered up, flowers, cross, the whole bit. Do you see the value of this kind of ceremony? Some of these children had been denied the right to participate in a loved one's funeral because the adults couldn't handle the idea of death and funerals, but what a beautiful ceremony they put together when given the chance and how healthy was their view of death, of even an animal.

Enough said about rats. If I'm not careful, I will be accused of upholding a rat cult!

SOCIALIZATION

WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

The best definition I found for community was in the Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, way down the list of definitions: community—shared activity; social intercourse; fellowship, communion; esp: social activity marked by a feeling of unity but also individual participation completely willing and not forced or coerced and without loss of individuality. (In order that there may be a community, there must be conscious and purposeful sharing. —Ernest Barker.)

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY?

"The living experience in the religion of Jesus thus becomes the sure and certain technique whereby the spiritually isolated and cosmically lonely mortals of earth are enabled to escape personality isolation, with all its consequences of fear and associated feelings of helplessness. In the fraternal realities of the kingdom of heaven the faith sons of God find final deliverance from the isolation of the self, both personal and planetary. The God-knowing believer increasingly experiences the ecstasy and grandeur of spiritual socialization on a universe scale—citizenship on high in association with the eternal realization of the divine destiny of perfection attainment." (p. 1985B)

In the Garden of Eden "The entire purpose of the western school system of the Garden was socialization. The forenoon periods of recess were devoted to practical horticulture and agriculture, the afternoon periods to competitive play. The evenings were employed in social intercourse and the cultivation of personal friendships." (p. 835C)

Socialization began very early for Jesus. We are told that during his infancy, "In the home where Jesus chanced to be there were two other children about his age, and among the near neighbors there were six others whose ages were sufficiently near his own to make them acceptable playfellows." (p.1355C) Joseph felt especially strongly about Jesus being allowed to play like other children so that he wouldn't be deprived "of the helpful experience of learning how to adjust himself to children of his own age." (p.1355C)

Between the ages of eight to ten, even though Jesus received his moral training and spiritual culture in his own home, and his intellectual and theological education from the chazan, his "real education—that equipment of mind and heart for the actual test of grappling with the difficult problems of life—he obtained by mingling with his fellow men. It was this close association with his fellow men, young and old, Jew and gentile, that afforded him the opportunity to know the human race. Jesus was highly educated in that he thoroughly understood men and devotedly loved them." (p. 1368)

When he was 8, because he did so well in school, he got to spend one week out of each month away from home visiting his uncles and aunts at their farms or fishing villages. Socialization for Jesus was not an exclusive, inbred, narrow experience. His community widened year by year, until he finally came to understand that his community was the whole of mankind.

One of the great joys of working with many children of six different ages is watching them develop as they learn the skills of socialization. At the day care center, we watch as the 4 1/2 year olds come into the program almost totally concerned with self and own needs, grow into 5th graders anxious to serve and explore the bigger world. As we watch hundreds of children mingle daily, we are given a multitude of opportunities to participate in aspects of their socialization—from problem solving and conflict resolution to self control; from organizing self and one's own stuff within a group situation to sharing one's stuff with others; from pursuing one's own interests to helping each other; from self-realization to being aware of the needs of others—striving for the balance of their own individual rights and the rights of the group. We watch as they grapple with the needs of self and the needs of the group.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS COMMUNITY TO GUIDE THIS PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION?

1. Be sure that we as adults aggressively study and put into practice the excellent current understandings about how children develop. Much of what is written now is based on more than 40 years of research and study about how children learn and grow; about what is developmentally appropriate at certain ages. For example, you don't make a 2-year-old sit for one hour listening to a preacher preach. (You don't successfully make adults do that either.) Children learn by doing; they learn in teams. *The Urantia Book* is full of the ways children learn. It is the responsibility of every adult who is to be around children to gain this knowledge, look at their own background, and then look at the individual child and respect his/her needs, abilities and age.

2. Provide a safe space for children—both physically and emotionally—where children can be themselves; pursue self-realization; go to an adult for holding, clarification or mediation, and have expectations of what it means to belong to the group.

3. Create a sense of belonging by involving the child in discussion regarding the environment, the problems; respect and listen to children's ideas and concerns; create a vision for the child of his/her responsibility to make the world a better place for all children. "We are beginning right here with our own environment and here's what you can do."

4. Expose children to a wide range of other children of different ethnic groups, different ages, different socio-economic levels, different talents and abilities. This will help children from a young age appreciate diversity. We go out of our way in our day care to point out the different talents of children. Nathan draws castles that look like you could go right inside. Katie can write interesting stories. Alex can hit home runs. Susan is creative at making up dances. Becky can make puppets and put on shows. This happens hundreds of times during the day—pointing out to other children the strengths of each. Things have changed in the world of crayons now too, as far as recognizing ethnic diversity. Remember the days when there was only one crayon for skin color—flesh? Now there are crayons and paints in many beautiful tones of browns, yellows, tans, reds, which are called skin tones. Every religion and culture has its stories and fairy tales. These can be read to children daily, giving them a flavor from around our planet in cultural and religious diversity. Fortunately it is a strong mandate coming from all sectors of education to promote appreciation of diversity.

REQUIREMENTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, COMMUNITY OBLIGATIONS, AND SERVICE

1. SELF CONTROL

"And the *manifestation* of greatness on a world like Urantia is the exhibition of self-control. The great man is not he who 'takes a city' or 'overthrows a nation,' but rather 'he who subdues his own tongue.'" (p. 317A)

The first and most basic responsibility which I believe must be considered in order for a child to experience successful community is to receive a call from the adult world to be responsible for him/herself. Now, I must remind you that I am talking about school age children—kindergarten—5th grade. This would not necessarily be expected, at this level anyway, with children who are younger than about 4 1/2. I often ask the question of the younger and older children, "If you don't control yourself, who will control you?" Of course the correct answer is, "You will" (meaning the teacher in charge) or "Someone else will." If a child is lacking in self-control, (and who isn't at some level?) then we will let that child know that s/he is being watched by all of the adults and perhaps even by the group, if such watchcare is demanded because of a child's lack of self-control. We will let the child know when his/her behavior is out of control or unacceptable. The child is always given a chance to choose to correct this objectionable behavior. Children this age don't like the feeling that they are going to be watched all the time and this, put together with the possibility that an adult will control them if they cannot

control themselves, is a strong call for them to exercise their own power over themselves. I often put forth the saying in an appropriate moment that, "He who controls himself is stronger than a king who rules a city," and children of this age seem to be able to understand this. Children like the idea of freedom. The more they show they can control themselves, the more freedom they have to "be their own boss." Children are not "bad" if they lack self-control. They need help because their energy level is too high, they have eaten "bad" food; they have had to sit too long, etc. Often we help children control or use up their "negative" energy (energy which keeps the rest of the group from enjoying a story or listening to each other), by having them do jumping jacks 100 or 200 times. They feel much better after doing something physical like this. It is not used as a punishment, but as a technique to help them become more powerful over themselves. Sometimes a child will come to us and say, "I need to get rid of some energy. Can I jump before the story?" This is just one example of an endless array of adult guidance. You will notice the attitude here—one of helping the child, not punishing the child. And let me tell you, they know the difference; they know where you are coming from.

2. RESPONSIBILITY OF OLDER KIDS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

In our day care center, we often talk in terms of older-younger children and what this means. Another way of putting it to them is, "Monkey see; Monkey do." The older kids (8-11) really enjoy this. We have experimented with this premise. An older kid will do something like stick out his/her tongue around a younger one and watch the younger one immediately do it also. The "Monkey see; Monkey do" principle can have many helpful ramifications if you can get the older kids in a group on "the right track." At the day care center we now are reaping the benefits of working with the older kids since kindergarten. This can mean from 4 to 6 years of training. I would like to emphasize that we still have many problems, but we can ask any of the "older" kids to help out with a younger one and usually they will do so eagerly. This can be anything from tying a shoe (better yet, teaching the younger one to tie), to reading a story, to putting on a bandage.

We now have middle school volunteers who grew up in day care and have come back to work in our environment and are showing forth the fruits of years of training in taking the responsibility for the training of the younger. We can put these 7th or 8th grade kids in most areas, and give them responsibility for watching over five or six kids in their area. This could be computers, games, pool, drama, blocks, etc. Because they are older they seem to naturally have a sense of responsibility for the younger and like the position. They love to teach the younger ones what they know. And as you are well aware, teaching what you have just learned is a universe principle: "As morontia ascenders studied and worked on the worlds of the local universe, so spirit ascenders continue to master new worlds while they prac-

tice at giving out to others that which they have imbibed at the experiential founts of wisdom." (p. 342C) And on Government on a Neighboring Planet: "After the first three years all pupils become assistant teachers, instructing those below them." (p. 812C) Rarely do the older kids misuse their position; and if they do slip and utter a cuss word, we hear about it immediately from the younger, who cannot as yet handle the gray areas.

3. REQUIREMENTS AND COMMUNITY OBLIGATIONS

Once again, I am going to use examples from my "laboratory" at the day care center because I think the principles represented by these examples can easily be put into operation in other arenas of community. It is interesting to watch how some of the desires for overcare of the environment comes about as a natural evolution. Each year, there seems to evolve a group of kids, usually boys, without any adult encouragement, who seem to want to take on the responsibility of watching out for problems around the day care environment. These are probably the policeman of the future. They call themselves by various names—the three that have surfaced in the last couple of years are: The Peace Patrol, Spy Club Incorporated, and Search and Rescue. Each time a club surfaces, a group following an obvious leader type will come and say they want to set up a club. I ask them to write up for me their purpose and why they want to be a club and what they are going to do as a club. Their main purposes turn out with the same theme: to keep the peace; to look for and solve problems; to report on other kids who are causing problems; to look for suspicious activities of others outside day care. What we are observing here, I believe, is a desire on the part of school age children to participate in helping their community keep order. They can and want to take much more responsibility than most adults are willing to let them have. We are underestimating, undervaluing, and perhaps negating the abilities and altruistic desires of children if we do not allow them to take responsibilities in their communities, and in the community in general. *The Urantia Book* tells us how civic responsibility works on that other planet. "Children remain legally subject to their parents until they are fifteen when the first initiation into civic responsibility is held. Thereafter, every five years for five successive periods similar public exercises are held for such age groups at which their obligations to parents are lessened, while new civic and social responsibilities to the state are assumed." (p. 811D)

4. SERVICE

"Spiritual living mightily increases true self-respect. But self-respect is not self-admiration. Self-respect is always co-ordinate with the love and service of one's fellows. It is not possible to respect yourself more than you love your neighbor; the one is the measure of the capacity of the other." (p. 1740A)

There is no question that self-esteem is a building block of success for children. Of course this foundation is laid in the home, but the wider community adds to the child's self

esteem by expanding the realms within which the child can do things which make him/her feel good. Serving others is one of these realms that the adult guides should work vigorously to provide. It is not easy to find realms these days where children can really be of service, aside from perfunctorily emptying the garbage at home and cleaning the board at school. Our culture today is much geared toward making the child happy and fulfilling the child's needs and entertaining the child. This is not the way children develop compassion and a sense of responsibility toward others. All communities should find ways for its children to serve others. At our day care center, we take groups of children to a retirement home where they play games or just visit, listening to stories of war wounds and grandchildren that the elders tell. When I was working with the FOG children, I would pile these little 3, 4, and 5 year olds in my car and drive to the nearest nursing home. These old, old people just loved to look at and touch these little ones and the little ones were told they were helping the older ones to "feel life." And it didn't take much looking for the children to realize how little life there was around. They came away talking about how they made an old man smile who looked like he was going to cry; about how they gave an old lady one of their Bingo numbers so she could win and be happy.

Our middle school volunteers are so eager to serve when they come to the day care after school. We do not even begin to use this energy. A walk through Mission in San Francisco, giving pocket change to mothers, children and old men and women, puts a lasting image in a teenager's mind and perhaps even creates a desire to do something about it someday. Some parents think they are protecting their children by not allowing them to even see such misery, much less encourage them to do something about it. At Christmas, in our area of California, there is a very active Christmas bureau called Adopt a Family which collects food and presents and distributes them to thousands of poverty stricken families. We "adopt" 10 or so families at the center, and the children willingly give up a present or two of their own as they bring in presents for people that have almost nothing.

"Service—purposeful service, not slavery—is productive of the highest satisfaction and is expressive of the divinest dignity. Service—more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous service, and at last divine and perfect service—is the goal of time and the destination of space." (p. 316C)

We can provide the opportunity for children to experience this "highest satisfaction" within community. When they see other children so serving, it quickens their own desires and they will model after what they see other children doing and telling about.

FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL REALITIES— VALUES AND LOYALTIES

The one quote from *The Urantia Book* which has saved me from the guilt of the many mistakes I have made with children and from my own human weaknesses which seem

to become more obvious when I am in the presence of children, is the quote on loyalty:

"Children are permanently impressed only by the loyalties of their adult associates; precept or even example is not lastingly influential. Loyal persons are growing persons, and growth is an impressive and inspiring reality." (p. 1094D)

In order to answer the obvious question of "What are these loyalties to which children respond?" and extend the meaning of this quote, let's look at page 2088:

"Always did the Master co-ordinate the faith of the soul with the wisdom-appraisals of seasoned experience. Personal faith, spiritual hope, and moral devotion were always correlated in a matchless religious unity of harmonious association with the keen realization of the reality and sacredness of all human loyalties—personal honor, family love, religious obligation, social duty, and economic necessity."

These loyalties are what children will be "grocking" on an unconscious level every minute they are in our presence. We do not tell them these things; we live them. They will be listening when we don't know they are listening; they will be watching our face as we have a chance to get into a movie cheaper if we lie (personal honor); they will be aware if we go out of our way to help others (social duty); they will watch how we treat each other and give support and love in our families (family love). Whether or not you have thought about religious training in the home will become more apparent as they grow day by day (religious obligation). They know, on some level how we make our money and on what we spend it. They look at how we use our free time. When we really become aware of how pervasively this truth about children responding to our loyalties must be in our everyday life, we are faced with the biggest challenge of spiritual community: living the truths and the values that are put forth in this revelation and which are operating in all genuine religions of the world.

Too often, it seems, parents, communities, churches, society have kept spiritual realities and spiritual development in a realm all by itself. "It's Sunday, or Saturday; time for your religious training. This is the time to pray, to read your Bibles, etc." Now, hopefully, students of true and genuine religion know better. They know that religion and spiritual growth is a way of life. But in order to make this a reality, we have to develop a continual and progressive consciousness about how we are living our values. What are some of these values which can be embraced in a living consciousness as we live with children in community?

RELATIONSHIP

"Values are not conceptual illusions; they are real, but always they depend on the fact of relationships." (p.1097A) If we are to translate this into working with children in community, we must ask the question: How are we interacting with our children, and how are we teaching our

children to interact with each other, which promotes the value of relationship?

It's nice to think of interaction and relationship as being a warm, loving, caring experience, and hopefully most of the time it is. But sometimes we notice that what kids around the center, and perhaps kids anywhere, are really interested in is: How do the adults solve their problems? Do the adults see problems as ways of learning things? What is the difference in the learning experience of a child when s/he observes a situation when (a) an adult getting a child in trouble because that child hit another and (b) the adult helping the two children to learn to express their feelings to each other and try to understand where the problem happened and how it can be worked out better next time? One way is punitive and isolating; the other establishes the value of relationship. This is not to say that the child who hit another won't experience a consequence. But the emphasis must be put first on the relationship between those two children and what went wrong and what can be done next time to solve the problem without hurting. These techniques lead the children to understand each other and look at each other's motives:

"You can best discover values in your associates by discovering their motivation. If some one irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct. If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and this tolerance will grow into friendship and ripen into love." "If you could only fathom the motives of your associates, how much better you would understand them. If you could only know your fellows, you would eventually fall in love with them." (p. 1098C)

If children are encouraged to talk and listen to each other before they get in "trouble," so as to understand what went wrong, what was the other thinking or feeling; then the emphasis for the kids is not on, "Oh, Oh, I am going to get in trouble," but rather on the parties involved understanding what to do next time there is a problem. We use this technique with hundreds of children at the center. You will see even kindergarten children "talking about it" with each other. The teacher or adult stands by as a mediator or moderator, helping each to ask the questions which will bring forth understanding. This technique helps tremendously with creating a feeling a community, because it creates understanding which creates love.

PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICTS

"New religious insights arise out of conflicts which initiate the choosing of new and better reaction; habits in the place of older and inferior reaction patterns. New meanings only emerge amid conflict, and conflict persists only in the fact of refusal to espouse the higher values connoted in superior meanings." (p. 1097C)

Most of us do fine when the road is smooth, but just let a few bumps come up like spilt milk on a nice tablecloth and

a problem becomes an excuse for dumping on a kid rather than a mistake from which a lesson can be learned. Children seem especially interested in problems and conflicts. When something happens around the center which is a problem we usually do not make an attempt to keep it quiet or bring it over to the corner. We want the children to see how mistakes are handled and problems are solved. We want them to hear two children telling each other how they feel. We do not want to isolate them from problem solving because it is often through problem solving that the nitty gritty of the spiritual life can come through. If "Mortals only learn wisdom by experiencing tribulation" (p. 556D), and "Success may generate courage and promote confidence, but wisdom comes only from the experiences of adjustment to the results of one's failures" (p. 1779D), then we must become more conscious of the many daily, normal and ordinary things that go on in children's lives which may help them develop wisdom from their failures, mistakes, and problems, rather than these becoming a breeding ground for fear of making mistakes and being put down for trying and failing.

Many a time I have heard a parent say in a voice, the tone of which adds, "You dummy," after something like, "What, you left your coat in your classroom again? (You dummy.)" Children first respond to body language and they are reading unnoticeable subliminal changes in our faces and bodies even before we come out with the tone of voice which puts them down for making a mistake. It is a wonderful experience for the child when a parent responds with, "Oh dear, you forgot your coat again. Let's see if we can work out a plan for you to remember it next time. What ideas do you have?" This may not seem like a spiritually developmental step for the child but the parent is teaching the child that s/he is not dumb for leaving their coat behind, and is helping the child to think about next time—what wisdom can be developed from the present experience. Things like this happen everyday which I think are the true foundation of spiritual realities for children—the true definition of morality—how we treat each other.

TRUTH, BEAUTY, GOODNESS

There seem to be many kids in the generation now in their early 20's or so who grew up without these concepts because their parents were afraid to emphasize these concepts in their moral training. Even teachers in classrooms have stayed away from these concepts for the fear of teaching "religion." I believe that community can be furthered with children when they are called to live according to the highest; to make decisions which honor the goodness of life and each other; to seek for truth and to do good to each other. It is powerful when the call is made to groups of children, because there are the ones who heed the call and they can become the moral standard bearers to the ones who are weaker or less clear about where real strength is. We have had discussions about the "baddest people in the world," and, of course, Hitler and Hussein are on

everyone's list. Then I have made a line for them in their minds and have told them that there is good and evil and that they can choose which side to be on. Some are really not sure what side to be on, because unfortunately in our society, good has been intertwined with female and wishy washy and not very much fun or exciting, so many of the more adventurous ones, especially the males, are lost to the side of the "bad," which definitely carries more adventure. We are told on page 159D that love of adventure, curiosity, and dread of monotony are traits inherent in evolving human nature. How can the adult world make Truth, Beauty, and Goodness adventurous? I am not sure what the answers are, but we must be creative and open to all possibilities and share with each other what we find out works.

Being out in nature is certainly one way to allow for a combination of adventure and religious experience. Kids will come together in community just at the thought of the possibility of having adventures together, of exploring the world and making discoveries. At the center we take periodic "backpacking trips" where we go up into the hills on a 5-mile hike with the possibilities of snakes and bulls, and high hills that one could fall down. On the last trip a few months ago most of the 50 or so of us were walking on the cow path but about 15 (all boys) wanted to climb a huge hill and walk along parallel with us on the hill. These were children of all ages. The more adventurous ones needed that extra sense of challenge. It looked to me like the hill was almost straight up and down. They loved the challenge of getting to the top and then getting down, falling and rolling and complaining about how hard it was, but they talked about the conquest of that hill all the way back to the center.

I would like to end this sharing with the call which Norman Lear gave in 1990 to about 8,500 teachers gathered at the National Teacher's Association Conference in Kansas. He gave forth a lot of wonderful ideals directly from *The Urantia Book* in this talk. He began by telling teachers everywhere to pay attention to the

"...mysterious inner life, the fertile, invisible realm that is the wellspring of our species' creativity and morality. It is that portion of our being that gives rise to our sense of awe and wonder and longing for truth, beauty and a higher order of meaning. For want of a better term, one could call it the spiritual life of our species."

And he ended his talk 45 minutes later after about 12 interruptions of applause with these inspirational words:

"The progress of our species, I believe, requires whatever horizontal progress must yet be made. The progress requires a giant vertical leap, a leap in our inner development. We have been embarked from the beginning of human history on a search for transcendent meaning, connecting with a higher order and that is where the next great improvement in our condition, where the next bit of progress must occur.

"We must respect each other's faiths, of course, but we can't be so squeamish or parochial as to think that one of the great human imperatives of our time, the rediscovery and reinvention of a common spiritual life in our desolate modern age, can or should be suppressed. The answer is not to banish these issues from the schools, it is to fling open the doors and find new ways of learning more about each others' values and spiritual traditions and what we all hold in common as a species.

"If one were to look at a very long river, one might see flora and fauna and trees and shrubs of varying nature along the many miles of its banks. If we think of our many and varied religions as uniquely different trees along a thousand-mile river and appreciate that they are all nurtured by the same stream, can we not agree to discuss that stream openly, freely and anywhere and everywhere as a river of common values? It will both nurture all of our spiritual traditions while uniting us as a people. In that metaphor, perhaps lies our challenge.

"There is ample reason to strip away our cultural conditioning and give free rein to a fresh examination of what we regard as sacred in the universe, on earth and in our daily lives. Now, I realize that you in this hall already face enormous pressures and problems in your classrooms; and you hardly need another responsibility, but the problems and needs of the culture have thrust this upon you. A civilization cannot progress when the majority of its youth devote their interests and their energies to the materialistic pursuits of the sensory or outer world. When the young neglect to interest themselves in ethics, philosophy, the fine arts, religion, and cosmology or in the values of truth, beauty, goodness, love, loyalty and devotion, civility itself ceases.

"So wouldn't it be wonderful, if in the process of teaching, you uncover or discover a new, more spiritually satisfying notion of progress; one that relies less on a millennial faith in technology and rediscovers the center of our being. One could imagine this search taking place in other institutions of our society, but none are as suited to this task or as likely to have as great an influence as you. 'In the long run,' wrote Henry David Thoreau, 'men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high.'

"You could not aim higher or better prepare the next generation for the world that we live in than to teach it to look deeper into itself to that place that humans from the very beginning of time have shared—the same sense of awe and wonder as they groped for meaning. I thank you so much."

And I thank you for going with me on some of my personal journeys with children. If you and I and all other adults get clear on our own values, attempt to live them, and courageously, assertively, and lovingly go forth with our younger ones into the adventurous light of God's will, then most of them will come along, eventually. And remember we are

not doing this alone. Each of our children has or will have his/her own Thought Adjuster. The Universe Mother Spirit encircuits each one with the seven powerful adjutants; the Spirit of Truth is pervasive, and there are millions of angels

of all types who stand by willing and ready to help bring us and our children into the everlasting community of our Father's eternal worlds of love and service. All we have to do is live the truth!

PITFALLS OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

Let me set the stage, the props of which many of you are well familiar. There was an enthusiastic organization established in the late 1960s for the purpose of spreading the teachings of Jesus on worldwide radio. It began as a small group of dedicated students of *The Urantia Book* under the leadership of Vern and Nancy Grimsley. It grew to be an organization of more than 40 or so people who ended up in a shelter together waiting for a nuclear war to happen, based on channeled messages which Vern, myself and another co-worker had received. It was a powerful experience in spiritual community for better and for worse, but at this point in my life, the learnings and understandings which have been gleaned from that experience have made my life so rich, that I don't think I would want to miss it, if I had to do it over again.

I would like to clearly state that the following is strictly my own perceptions; another person who was involved could have entirely different things to say about his/her experience. There were many, many wonderful things which were experienced in this community of up to 40 people. We felt much like a family as we ate together, worshipped together, played together, studied together. We felt we shared the common goals of sharing God with the world. Many of us have become lifelong friends and will probably still be working together on the mansion worlds. Twenty-five years ago, The Family of God Foundation was about the only spiritual community of readers of *The Urantia Book* around, aside from a few large study groups. So what went wrong with this experiment in spiritual community that many of us felt we were committed to for life?

The following discussion of what seems to be the more obvious *pitfalls* of this particular community is not meant to be a scholarly work by any means. It is, as I said, a sharing of my personal understandings. I have talked with many, many people over the last seven years, and I think that many of the ideas and opinions in these conversations have become incorporated into what I present now.

The purpose of my desire to share this now fits into the context of our Wrightwood Series on the topic of Community. I believe that one must look at the problems and pitfalls of spiritual community, as well as the wonderful things, if one is to give the topic a full and honest examination.

The little vignette I am going to share with you came literally at the very end of this experiment with spiritual community. You may or may not remember that day about 7 years ago in March of 1985, when about 40 of us almost literally disappeared into our own fog—down into a shelter which we had spent more than a year preparing based on messages which Vern Grimsley, myself and another FOG member had received predicting a nuclear war.

At this time my grandmother, who was about 98, had been living with me, my husband and son for about a year and during that time she had the opportunity to have dinner

with many of the people who were involved in FOG. She enjoyed them and they her. Well, on this beautiful spring day in March 7 years ago, Bob and I rented a U-Haul truck and loaded up most of our belongings which would be useful during a nuclear war. This included all of the paraphernalia which Grandma would need—her special bed, her commode, her wheelchair, her screen for privacy, her medications. When we arrived at the shelter (we just made it under the midnight deadline—the gate was to be locked—for we were all supposed to be there by that time), we unloaded Grandma, took her down into the shelter with great ceremony, set up her bed, her commode, the screen for privacy, and put her to bed.

Of course, the sun rose the next morning instead of a nuclear cloud and about noon, I awakened Grandma and told her that everything was alright and we were going home. She said she knew it would be alright and that she had one of the best night's sleep she'd had in years. When we got everything back home Grandma was very quiet and she just sat and rocked and rocked for days. You could see her trying to put this all together to make some sense of the happenings, as were our neighbors, I imagine. About three days later when I was able to say several words without breaking down and crying, I asked what she thought about all of this. As she sat there rocking, she slowly muttered, "And they all seemed so normal."

Unknowingly, Grandma Lou summed up some aspects of the Family of God spiritual community experience: We all seemed so normal. Except that we weren't really—things were askew in some basic ways. I will call these deviations PITFALLS.

PITFALL #1

The group was following an ideal as a "shell" because many did not have the foundation within their own lives. Instead of making the ideal of the family of God a reality in their own lives with their own families, some of the co-workers even chose to skip this essential experience. This produced a hollow echo of words as they went over the air waves.

The strangest thing was that this organization was based on the family model from *The Urantia Book*—God is our Father; we are all brothers and sisters on this planet, and yet the two people involved had chosen NOT to have a family because of their total devotion to this ideal of sharing something with the rest of the planet about which they had not had actual experience—the family unit. It went from there—several other couples decided that they were so devoted to telling the world about God, that they decided they didn't have time to have a family. Many people put off further college education or left promising jobs on the "outside" world in order to pursue this ideal.

ANTIDOTE FOR PITFALL #1

Participants in a spiritual community must put their primary attention on the building of foundational ideals within their own lives first. Then they will have the experiential ticket to go from there.

"Future religionists must live out their religion, dedicate themselves to the wholehearted service of the brotherhood of man. It is high time that man had a religious experience so personal and so sublime that it could be realized and expressed only by 'feelings that lie too deep for words.'" (p. 1091D)

Participants in spiritual community must get their priorities straight. It is NOT to first go out and tell the world about God; it is to first live it in one's own personal life.

"But do not make the mistake of trying to prove to other men that you have found God; you cannot consciously produce such valid proof, albeit there are two positive and powerful demonstrations of the fact that you are God-knowing and they are:

1. The fruits of the spirit of God showing forth in your daily routine life.
2. The fact that your entire life plan furnishes positive proof that you have unreservedly risked everything you are and have on the adventure of survival after death in the pursuit of the hope of finding the God of eternity, whose presence you have foretasted in time." page 1733B

PITFALL #2

Ignorance of the leadership and membership regarding

- (1) basic cult phenomena;
- (2) channeling phenomena;
- (3) psychological processes.

The phenomena we experienced as a group were not uncommon for religious groups to experience:

- a. Predictions of great catastrophe, destruction, or crisis, leading to a "D day."
- b. Strong charismatic leader who claims special contact with superhuman beings.
- c. Sincere but needy people committed to great religious ideals seeking to fulfill themselves by doing "great things."

d. Channeling from superhuman contacts giving instructions to the rest of the group.

ANTIDOTE FOR PITFALL #2

1. The education of individuals and groups about what has been experienced by other religious groups who have made special claims about their experiences. This responsibility for education could be taken on by community leadership, family leadership, or individual seeking. There is much information out there about cult phenomena and channeling. One recently published book (1990) is *With the Tongues of Men and Angels—a Study of Channeling*, by Arthur Hastings, which examines most of the commonly known channeling phenomena from the Tibetan Oracles to *The Urantia Book*, showing how common the phenomenon is, although *The Urantia Book* is not considered channeled information in the sense that these other phenomena are. Unfortunately there is not a distinction made and *The Urantia Book* is given a rather superficial examination by Hastings. The point is that even back in 1984 when Vern Grimsley began to get his "messages," channeling had been around for a long time, and yet we were told in one group meeting, that this was a phenomenon unlike any other which had been heard of.

2. Individuals and groups must take the responsibility for gaining basic education regarding psychological principles in order to understand and perhaps be able to recognize such psychological concepts as projection and inflation. An example of community taking on this kind of education was shown in the theme chosen by the Golden Gate Circle Society of the San Francisco Bay Area for a recent weekend conference: "The Connection Between the Psychology of Carl Jung and *The Urantia Book*." Three different presentations were given on this topic during the conference, and at the least the participants came away with some basic concepts with which to help understand what goes on in others.

PITFALL #3

THE "CHOSEN-PEOPLE" ATTITUDE: this is in a list of the dangers of formalized religion found on page 1092:

"But as religion becomes institutionalized, its power for good is curtailed, while the possibilities for evil are greatly multiplied. The dangers of formalized religion are: "...creation of the aristocratic "chosen-people" attitude..."

It was not something that most of the co-workers at FOG would have been willing to admit, but this attitude of specialness was certainly there. We were "called" to do "special" work of telling the world about the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. After talking with people over the years who interfaced with FOG, it became obvious (after the fact) that many felt strongly that we put forth this attitude. It was also strengthened by the leadership claiming to be a member of the reserve corps of destiny, and then proceeding to get special messages, and being called to save the revelation and to spread it. I do not

doubt that the motivations were sincere, but we know that sincerity can lead into dangerous ways. Talking about the default of Eve in the Garden, Solonia, the seraphic "voice in the Garden," says of sincerity,

"Even though this project of modifying the divine plan had been conceived and executed with entire sincerity and with only the highest motives concerning the welfare of the world, it constituted evil because it represented the wrong way to achieve righteous ends, because it departed from the right way, the divine plan." (p. 842D)

ANTIDOTE FOR PITFALL #3

To live a normal, ordinary life; and to establish the kingdom by such methods:

"Jesus chose to establish the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of mankind by natural, ordinary, difficult, and trying methods, just such procedures as his earth children must subsequently follow in their work of enlarging and extending that heavenly kingdom." (p. 1521A)

One doesn't have to be in a special organization doing special and great things to be doing God's will:

"And fail not to remember that the will of God can be done in any earthly occupation. Some callings are not holy and others secular. All things are sacred in the lives of those who are spirit led; that is, subordinated to truth, ennobled by love, dominated by mercy, and restrained by fairness—justice." (p. 1732D)

PITFALL #4

LACK OF ABILITY TO BE SELF-CRITICAL AS AN ORGANIZATION:

Obviously, the Family of God Foundation departed from the state of facts. It perhaps was a fact that there was a serious threat of nuclear war in the world in the 1980's. But it was not a fact that there was going to be a nuclear war on March 25, 1985. Sticking carrots in sand and carrying Grandma down into the shelter and allowing our 13-year-old son to buy a camouflage outfit and a dirt bike to be a messenger boy during the war, and looking for landing spots to land an airplane show how reason abdicated rapidly and consorted with false logic.

Channeling is also not a FACT. It is a personal experience that an individual is having in their mind. It may be a qualitative experience that one is having in their own mind. "Quantity may be identified as a fact, thus becoming a scientific uniformity. Quality, being a matter of mind interpretation, represents an estimate of values, and must,

therefore, remain an experience of the individual" (p. 1477). It appears that great mischievousness can come when an individual forces his/her personal experience on others.

ANTIDOTE FOR PITFALL #4

The Urantia Book tells us:

"What both developing science and religion need is more searching and fearless self-criticism, a greater awareness of incompleteness in evolutionary status. The teachers of both science and religion are often altogether too self-confident and dogmatic. Science and religion can only be self-critical of the facts. The moment departure is made from the state of facts, reason abdicates or else rapidly degenerates into a consort of false logic." (p.1131)

How we become more searching and fearless in our self-criticism requires more discussion, for I am not sure *how* this looks, except to be willing to be honest with self and others; not to hide things behind "specialness"; and to share fears and doubts with each other.

PITFALL #5

TURNING OVER PERSONAL DECISION MAKING TO ANOTHER OR OTHERS

This is probably one of the more elusive and difficult ones to analyze because each one of us thought that we were asking the Father what His will was, and each of us thought that we were following that will to one degree or another. We really felt that we were willing to go anywhere, do anything to serve God. It did appear that we participated in making our own decisions within the context of the group. I don't think that at the time we felt we were being controlled. At least I should speak for myself. Although I guess it could be said perhaps we were being controlled by our own unconscious desires to be great or do great things, or that we were responding to archetypes of leadership or importance.

ANTIDOTE FOR PITFALL #5

"Sometimes the planting of a seed necessitates its death, the death of your fondest hopes, before it can be reborn to bear the fruits of new life and new opportunity. And from them [the ministering reserve seraphim] you will learn to suffer less through sorrow and disappointment, first, by making fewer personal plans concerning other personalities, and then, by accepting your lot when you have faithfully performed your duty" (p. 555).

SPIRITUAL SUPPORT GROUPS

By Jill Hull

OVERVIEW

"Man is innately a social creature; he is dominated by the craving of belongingness." (p. 1227:6)

This truth, so dramatically stated in *The Urantia Book*, is also the foundation of *The Different Drum—Community Making and Peace* by M. Scott Peck, author, lecturer and founder of The Foundation for Community Encouragement, Inc. Peck states, "On my lecture tours across the country the one constant I have found wherever I go—the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, or West Coast—is the lack of—and the thirst for—community." (p. 57)

Peck further states, "Trapped in our tradition of rugged individualism, we are an extraordinarily lonely people. So lonely, in fact, that many cannot even acknowledge their loneliness to themselves, much less to others." (p. 58)

The Urantia Book explains that "Religion effectively cures man's sense of idealistic isolation or spiritual loneliness..." (p. 1117:1) and it further states, "But no God-knowing mortal can ever be lonely in his journey through the cosmos, for he knows that the Father walks beside him each step of the way, while the very way that he is traversing is the presence of the Supreme." (p. 1291:4) An antidote for man's loneliness and craving of belongingness is a spiritual support group, because it can give members a feeling of belonging and being loved, while at the same time it can nurture their connection with God, which is the only infallible cure for loneliness.

Jesus repeatedly included in his message the imperative to "love one another." He explained to Ganid that "To become acquainted with one's brothers and sisters, to know their problems and to learn to love them, is the supreme experience of living" (p. 1431:1) and among his last instructions to his apostles was the statement, "You shall love one another with a new and startling affection..." (p. 2044:3) The importance of loving our fellows is highlighted in the statement, "...the great problem of religious living consists in the task of unifying the soul powers of the personality by the dominance of love." (p. 1097:7)

The Urantia Book, however, explains that "You cannot truly love your fellows by a mere act of will. Love is only born of thoroughgoing understanding of your neighbor's motives and sentiments." (p. 1098:3) It also points out, "When a wise man understands the inner impulses of his fellows, he will love them." (p. 1898:4)

A spiritual support group can provide opportunity to really get to know and understand other members, and "If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and this tolerance will grow into friendship and ripen into love." (p. 1098:1) Even Jesus "...craved a trustworthy and

confidential friend." (p. 1391:8) Undeniably, the loving relationships which can develop in a support group are a major reason for participation. "Everything nonspiritual in human experience, excepting personality, is a means to an end. Every true relationship of mortal man with other persons—human and divine—is an end in itself." (p. 1228:3)

Furthermore, the spiritual component is essential because, as *The Urantia Book* points out, "Only a God-knowing individual can love another person as he loves himself." (p. 196:4) A group where members are learning to truly love one another must have a spiritual base because "All true love is from God, and man receives the divine affection as he himself bestows this love upon his fellows. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured; it is alive, free, thrilling, and always moving. Man can never take the love of the Father and imprison it within his heart. The Father's love can become real to mortal man only by passing through that man's personality as he in turn bestows this love upon his fellows. The great circuit of love is from the Father, through sons to brothers, and hence to the Supreme." (p. 1289:3)

The combined nature of a spiritual support group is appropriate because "...many souls can best be led to love the unseen God by being first taught to love their brethren whom they can see..." (p. 1727:4) while, on the other hand, "You will learn to love your brethren more when you first learn to love their Father in heaven more, and after you have become truly more interested in their welfare in time and in eternity. And all such human interest is fostered by understanding sympathy, unselfish service, and unstinted forgiveness." (p. 1955:6)

Thus, since love flows in an unbroken circuit, we can plug into it through worship of the Father, through realization of the spirit in ourselves, through passing the Father's love on to our fellows, or through our soul connection in the Supreme. Regardless of our point of entry, once we tap in we are involved in the entire circuit.

A spiritual support group can offer practice in working together and "One of the most important lessons to be learned during your mortal career is teamwork" (p. 312:1). Teamwork is so important that we continue to work on it well beyond our mortal careers. For example, a comprehensive program is outlined for living and working with diverse fellow morontians and univiatia on the constellation training worlds. (p. 494:4) Only the Solitary Messengers work alone in the universe. (p. 256:7)

Forming spiritual support groups may be a way to cooperate with the universal plan, since "Social architects do everything within their province and power to bring together suitable individuals that they may constitute efficient and

agreeable working groups on earth." (p. 432:6)

Working in a group can also, perhaps, aid the angels in their tasks. "Seraphim are mind stimulators; they continually seek to promote circle-making decisions in human mind. They do this, not as does the Adjuster, operating from within and through the soul, but rather from the outside inward, working through the social, ethical, and moral environment of human beings." (p. 1245:1) The trust-building function of a support group can help the Spirits of Trust, whose mission it is "to inculcate trust into the minds of evolving men." (p. 437:6)

Through support groups, we can likewise help to manifest the oneness Jesus prayed that we would know when he said, "And now, my Father, I would pray not only for these eleven men but also for all others who now believe, or who may hereafter believe the gospel of the kingdom through the word of their future ministry. I want them all to be one, even as you and I are one... If my children are one as we are one, and if they love one another as I have loved them, all men will then believe that I came forth from you and be willing to receive the revelation of truth and glory which I have made." (p. 1964:3)

Spiritual support groups can accomplish one or all of the following broad purposes:

1. to provide opportunities for members to understand themselves better, to raise low self-esteem, and to more completely love their fellows;
2. to enhance members' ability to solve their own earthly problems and live more spiritual lives, through providing a loving atmosphere, reflecting spiritual perspectives and encouraging spiritual approaches to problem solving;
3. to actively support the religious growth of members; and
4. to provide avenues for service to one's fellows.

Low self-esteem is all too common in our society and support groups can help people to appreciate their true worth through loving interactions and through reminders of the fact that we are children of God. "The love of God strikingly portrays the transcendent value of each will creature, unmistakably reveals the high value which the Universal Father has placed upon each and every one of his children from the highest creator personality of Paradise status to the lowest personality of will dignity among the savage tribes of men in the dawn of the human species on some evolutionary world of time and space." (p. 138:4)

Support group members can take their lead from Jesus who said, "It is the purpose of this gospel to restore self-respect to those who have lost it and to restrain it in those who have it... Forget not that I will stop at nothing to restore self-respect to those who have lost it, and who really desire to regain it." (p. 1765:5)

Understanding oneself and others better is another value to be derived from a support group and, "Society is concerned with self-perpetuation, self-maintenance, and self-

gratification, but human self-realization is worthy of becoming the immediate goal of many cultural groups." (p. 764:6) "The soil essential for religious growth presupposes a progressive life of self-realization..." (p. 1094:7) Through becoming "mirrors" for each other members of a support group can further the self-realization of participants. "Mutual understanding and fraternal love are transcendent civilizers and mighty factors in the world-wide realization of the brotherhood of man." (p. 598:2) Furthermore, "Truly educated persons are not satisfied with remaining in ignorance of the lives and doings of their fellows" (p. 1674:2) and "When a wise man understands the inner impulses of his fellows, he will love them." (p. 1898:4)

One of the most important benefits of a spiritual support group is a deeper experience of loving one's fellows. "And again and again he [Jesus] impressed upon them that love is the greatest relationship in the world—in the universe..." (p. 1615:5)

The Urantia Book gives guidelines on how to experience more profound love and a spiritual support group can be a great place to reinforce practicing these teachings. "If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, you really know that you are a son of God." (p. 1600:3) "Man even qualifies himself for the restraining garments of mercy when he dares to love his fellow men, while he achieves the beginnings of spiritual brotherhood when he elects to mete out to them that treatment which he himself would be accorded, even that treatment which he conceives that God would accord them." (p. 1302:7) This quote, which refers to daring to love one's fellows, points out that proffering love can involve risk. Humans, unlike God, feel rejection when they extend love and receive indifference. In a support group, members can reinforce each other in continuing to take the risks which ultimately pay off abundantly in spiritual growth.

"Love is the highest motivation which man may utilize in his universe ascent. But love, divested of truth, beauty, and goodness, is only a sentiment, a philosophic distortion, a psychic illusion, a spiritual deception. Love must always be redefined on successive levels of morontia and spirit progression." (p. 2096:5) A spiritual support group can provide the opportunity to better understand and refine the totality of one's experience of loving.

Applying spiritual principles to solving material problems is another legitimate purpose of a support group. As Jesus pointed out, "It is the Father's will that mortal man should work persistently and consistently toward the betterment of his estate on earth." (p. 1661:5) Jesus is eager for us to lead happy lives. He said, "Let me repeat: I have come that my brethren in the flesh may have joy, gladness, and life more abundantly." (p. 1558:6)

The spiritual support group can help members realize that spiritual living is instrumental in material problem solving. "The sincere religionist is conscious of universe citizenship and is aware of making contact with sources of super-human power. He is thrilled and energized with the

assurance of belonging to a superior and ennobled fellowship of the sons of God. The consciousness of self-worth has become augmented by the stimulus of the quest for the highest universe objectives—supreme goals.” (p. 1100:5)

The powerful truths of *The Urantia Book* can provide the cosmic perspective to give individuals courage, hope and assurance of ultimate happiness which can greatly reduce the suffering in even the most tragic human situation. One can not but respond optimistically to the good news encapsulated in such quotes as the following: “The Father loves each of his sons, and that affection is not less than true, holy, divine, unlimited, eternal, and unique—a love bestowed upon *this* son and upon *that* son, individually, personally, and exclusively. And such a love utterly eclipses all other facts.” (p. 454:2)

“Even as mortals, so have these angels been father to many disappointments, and they will point out that sometimes your most disappointing disappointments have become your greatest blessings.” (p. 555:4)

“The Creators are possessed of full power to make Urantia a veritable paradise, but such an Eden would not contribute to the development of those strong, noble, and experienced characters which the Gods are so surely forging out on your world between the anvils of necessity and the hammers of anguish. Your anxieties and sorrows, your trials and disappointments, are just as much a part of the divine plan on your sphere as are the exquisite perfection and infinite adaptation of all things to their supreme purpose on the worlds of the central and perfect universe.” (p. 258:11)

“There is a great and glorious purpose in the march of the universes through space. All of your mortal struggling is not in vain: We are all part of an immense plan, a gigantic enterprise, and it is the vastness of the undertaking that renders it impossible to see very much of it at any one time and during any one life.” (p. 364:3)

“The greatest affliction of the cosmos is never to have been afflicted. Mortals only learn wisdom by experiencing tribulation.” (p. 556:14)

“You cannot perceive spiritual truth until you feelingly experience it, and many truths are not really felt except in adversity.” (p. 557:2)

“To a God-knowing kingdom believer, what does it matter if all things earthly crash?” (p. 1096:4)

“But man can even now foretaste this providence in its eternity meanings as he ponders the universe fact that all things, be they good or evil, work together for the advancement of God-knowing mortals in their quest for the Father of all.” (p. 1306:7)

“True religion is designed to lessen the strain of existence; it releases faith and courage for daily living and unselfish serving. Faith promotes spiritual vitality and righteous fruitfulness.” (p. 1727:7)

“There is no material reward for righteous living, but there

is profound satisfaction—consciousness of achievement—and this transcends any conceivable material reward.” (p. 435:6)

Truths such as these can be great comfort and inspiration for those struggling with individual difficulties.

In addition to growing personally through focus on spiritual truths, members of a support group can enrich each others’ lives. “The more fully we bestow ourselves upon our fellows, the more fully we come to love them.” (p. 1419:2) The long-term commitment of a support group can provide ample opportunity for “bestowing ourselves upon” each other. Love can manifest more quickly and with greater depth because of the clear intention and focused environment.

Jesus taught his associates to recognize and minister to those with troubled minds as well as to those with physical illness. He instructed them to, “Liberate spiritual captives, comfort the oppressed, and minister to the afflicted.” (p. 1584:1) He further “...told his associates about the three forms of affliction...” which included “Troubled minds—those nonphysical afflictions which were subsequently looked upon as emotional and mental difficulties and disturbances.” (p. 1591:2)

Comfort for those with troubled minds is still sorely needed in today’s society. “During the psychologically unsettled times of the twentieth century, amid the economic upheavals, the moral crosscurrents, and the sociological 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.” (p. 1090:2) A spiritual support group can help such unsettled individuals experience the fact that “...true religion is the cure for soul hunger, spiritual disquiet, and moral despair.” (p. 1078:6) *The Urantia Book* explains, “It is only natural that mortal man should be harassed by feelings of insecurity as he views himself inextricably bound to nature while he possesses spiritual powers wholly transcendent to all things temporal and finite. Only religious confidence—living faith—can sustain man amid such difficult and perplexing problems.” (p. 1222:7)

A parallel purpose of a spiritual support group is to enrich the religious lives of each participant. “The highest happiness is indissolubly linked with spiritual progress. Spiritual growth yields lasting joy, peace which passes all understanding.” (p. 1098:0)

In describing the necessity to create a new cult, *The Urantia Book* explains, “The new cult must, like the old, foster sentiment, satisfy emotion, and promote loyalty; but it must do more: it must facilitate spiritual progress, enhance cosmic meanings, augment moral values, encourage social development, and stimulate a high type of personal religious living.” (p. 966:2) A support group environment can further all of these goals.

Although "...religion is purely and wholly a matter of personal experience" (p. 1539:4), it is also true that "Habits which favor religious growth embrace...recognition of religious living in others,...and sharing one's spiritual life with one's fellows..." (p. 1095:3). Furthermore, "Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists," (p. 1094) and "Human friendship and divine religion are mutually helpful and significantly illuminating if the growth in each is equalized and harmonized." (p. 1089:9)

Moreover, "It is a fact that religion does not grow unless it is disciplined by constructive criticism, amplified by philosophy, purified by science, and nourished by fellowship..." (p. 1088:8) and one "real purpose in the socialization of religion" is "to provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance." (p. 1092:2) A spiritual support group can provide constructive criticism, fellowship, wise counsel and spiritual guidance. Much mutual benefit can be derived from a group of sincere believers who meet regularly with the purpose (or at least one purpose) of stimulating and nurturing each other's spiritual growth, using teachings gleaned from *The Urantia Book* and other spiritual sources and experiences.

The practice which most effectively stimulates religious growth is service. "The contact of the mortal mind with its indwelling Adjuster, while often favored by devoted meditation, is more frequently facilitated by wholehearted and loving service in unselfish ministry to one's fellow creatures." (p. 1000:2) Furthermore, "...true religion is a living love, a life of service" (p. 1100:7). The experience of helping group members more fully connect with God can be an invaluable service. As *The Urantia Book* points out, "...those who lead men to God experience the supreme satisfaction of human service." (p. 1465:5)

In addition to serving each other through a spiritual support group, the group can plan and carry out service projects together. "Jesus never failed to exalt the sacredness of the individual as contrasted with the community. But he also recognized that man develops his character by unselfish service; that he unfolds his moral nature in loving relations with his fellows." (p. 1862:7) The rewards of service also go beyond personal character building. "Service—purposeful service, not slavery—is productive of the highest satisfaction and is expressive of the divinest dignity." (p. 316:4) Service projects are often best planned and carried out in groups, and can offer the added appeal of fellowship in serving together.

Although religious growth can be initiated by individuals, "Religion is first an inner or personal adjustment, and then it becomes a matter of social service or group adjustment." (p. 1090:10) Thus, a spiritual support group can be a valuable part of one's religious life. The advantages of pursuing spiritual growth in a group are also pointed out in the following quote: "While your religion is a matter of personal experience, it is most important that you should

be exposed to the knowledge of a vast number of other religious experiences (the diverse interpretations of other and diverse mortals) to the end that you may prevent your religious life from becoming egocentric—circumscribed, selfish, and unsocial." (p.1130:2) Furthermore, "A social group of human beings in co-ordinated working harmony stands for a force far greater than the simple sum of its parts." (p. 1477:1)

In encouraging the formation of social groups, *The Urantia Book* states, "These associations of friendship and mutual affection are socializing and ennobling because they encourage and facilitate the following essential factors of the higher levels of the art of living:

1. Mutual self-expression and self-understanding...
2. Union of souls—the mobilization of wisdom...
3. The enthusiasm for living... and
4. The enhanced defense against all evil." (p. 1775:6)

While "...such inspiring and ennobling association finds its ideal possibilities in the human marriage relation... much is attained out of marriage, and many, many marriages utterly fail to produce these moral and spiritual fruits." (p. 1777:1) In addition, *The Urantia Book* points out, "Truly, monogamy is ideal for those who are in, but it must inevitably work great hardship on those who are left out in the cold of solitary existence." (p. 927:5) Spiritual support groups can fill the gap for those who are not married or who are in less-than-ideal marriages. Furthermore, "Even families and nations will enjoy life more if they share it with others." (p. 1220:6) So, married people can also benefit from spiritual support groups.

Intentional communities, in which families "enjoy life more by sharing it with others," are a logical extension of the benefits of a spiritual support group. The advantages of a support group can be magnified in an intentional community, and the benefit of self-maintenance through a shared financial enterprise may be added. While this paper only touches upon the topic of intentional community, I encourage further effort in that direction.

The rest of this paper dips into the arena of intentional community, discusses some practical aspects of forming a spiritual support group, and concludes with an appendix of additional quotes from *The Urantia Book* which have implications for the functioning of spiritual support groups.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY AS SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

Perhaps the ultimate spiritual support group is the intentional community with a spiritual focus. *The Urantia Book* states, "Economic interdependence and social fraternity will ultimately conduce to brotherhood." (p. 1093:3)

Intentional communities can be extremely practical as well. "Primitive human beings early learned that groups are vastly greater and stronger than the mere sum of their individual units... But co-operation is not a natural trait of

man; he learns to co-operate first through fear and then later because he discovers it is most beneficial in meeting the difficulties of time and guarding against the supposed perils of eternity." (p. 763:7)

An intentional community can represent society at its best. "It is the business and duty of society to provide the child of nature with a fair and peaceful opportunity to pursue self-maintenance, participate in self-perpetuation, while at the same time enjoying some measure of self-gratification, the sum of all three constituting human happiness." (p. 794:12) Successful communities fit this description well and also parallel the fact that "...later civilizations are the better promoted by intelligent co-operation, understanding fraternity, and spiritual brotherhood." (p. 805:3)

Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson in *Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World* state, "Community probably provides the most profound and intense experience of personal growth that is available anywhere, if a person is open to it. The ultimate purpose of community is self-transcendence, going beyond our limited sense of self to realize our oneness with all others." (p. 30) This book, published in 1986 by Sirius Publishing, Shutesbury, Massachusetts, is a thorough discussion of intentional community. It gives details of many successful communities, guidelines for those who would like to create or become involved in a community, and addresses and phone numbers of many intentional communities for those interested in more information.

In support of *The Urantia Book* statement that, "There is always danger that monotony of human contact will greatly multiply perplexities and magnify difficulties" (p. 1611:5), the authors make the point that, "The new communities are not utopias where life is always easy and joyful... All the big issues in personal life—money, power, sex—are also big issues in community, but the basic agreement of community life is to work these problems out consciously and not to avoid them." (p. 61) They further state, "The most important thing is not whether the community as a form, a structure in itself, succeeds or fails but rather whether it serves the growth of the people who comprise it." (p. 333)

One point the authors make is that successful communities include a service component. They state, "But in order for a community to last more than a couple of years, it needs to be focused on more than the immediate survival, benefit, or happiness of its own members... When a community is able to turn outward and serve the needs of society, it lifts the whole group and thereby helps the growth of its members." (p. 52)

This point reflects the *Urantia Book* truth that, "the highest happiness is linked with the intelligent and enthusiastic pursuit of worthy goals, and that such achievements constitute true progress in cosmic self-realization." (p. 1037:1)

Builders of the Dawn includes a quote from Jim Frid, who lived at Sunrise Ranch in Colorado and later started the Washington, D.C. Emissaries of Divine Light Community:

"When communities only come together because of convenience or common interests, sooner or later that breaks down. It's not a cohesive reason to be together and to go through all the dynamics of close living. To be successful you've got to have something vastly more important at your core than common interest, or even the "common good," which is what most people think of when they think of community. You must participate with a concern for something larger than yourself. I think personal growth is a matter of service. We grow through service." (p. 52)

Frid added, "The greatest reason why Sunrise Ranch in Colorado and 100-Mile House in Vancouver, Canada, have lasted over thirty years is that the people there are not just drawn together on the basis of horizontal relationships. They're not merely drawn to each other. They're individually drawn to something higher than themselves, and then they naturally find themselves together, seeking to express that higher purpose. They found that they wanted to serve the larger world in various ways in that expression, and community is a natural and organic expression of that desire." (p. 314)

The Emissaries' community is one of the most successful spiritual communities in this country, having existed for almost 50 years and having expanded to 12 major centers and numerous smaller centers throughout this and other countries. The international network also includes many who do not live in the centers but who affiliate themselves with the appealing spiritual beliefs through subscriptions to publications and/or participation in worships held at the centers. Their ties to the earth through farming are important, along with their spiritual focus.

A publication entitled *A Conversation About Emissaries*, published by the 100-Mile Lodge Community, Canadian headquarters for the international Emissary program, explains their spiritual approach: "To us, the name 'Emissary' applies to anyone who brings a stable, true and loving spirit into his or her life. An Emissary has acknowledged that there is a great deal more potential to human beings than is usually actualized. Our approach is to take full responsibility for ourselves as individuals, and to face and let go of attitudes that limit the release of our own potential. Through giving we discover ourselves, and our concern is to give whatever is practical and helpful into any situation. There are no doubt thousands of people whose presence where they are is radiant and uplifting—bringing light—and who in our terms are Emissaries. What we are doing does not require labels or a set of regulations, of do's and don'ts." (p. 3) This attitude of inclusivity rather than exclusivity partially explains their success as a community.

In response to the question, "Are you Christian?" the pamphlet responds, "We acknowledge Jesus. Because divine light shone potently through him, his life has had an effect on the whole world through centuries of history. He was the outstanding example of the masterful living that we see as possible for every human being." (p. 3)

Information about the Emissaries of Divine Light is available from Sunrise Ranch, Loveland, Colorado 80537, phone number (303) 667-4675 or Emissary Foundation International, Box 9, 100-Mile House, British Columbia, Canada VOK 2E0, phone number (604) 395-4077.

"Urantia Hill" is a community in Captain Cook, Hawaii. According to Martain Quincy, a member, it began in 1976 when the original community members actively sought *Urantia Book* readers to buy adjoining land. They are not formally organized as an intentional community, although they have Urantia meetings twice a month. "We are simply a neighborhood with *The Urantia Book* as common ground," according to Quincy. "There is," he added, "a continuing spontaneous element of activities that individuals sponsor. The main benefit of community is the support of close neighbors." Although there is no organized support group, "The spiritual support group is a spontaneous activity in times of need that is met singly or by groups or combinations of families. We are a group that has been together so long, just about every family has had to work out problems from minor to very major with just about every other family."

Quincy said, "In most aspects the community is working very well." However, he mentioned, "We have a couple of individuals who are basically self-ostracized from the community because of inability to treat their fellows fairly. That will always be a problem for communities, as there is a percentage of humanity that can't function socially."

He expressed an interest in helping other aspiring communities and his main advice is that "each family must own their own property." Several attempts at joint ownership of property in the "Urantia Hill" community have failed.

Quincy summarized, "Although we as a group have had many feuds and seeming failures of brotherhood, have felt disgust at others for inability to communicate, from the long term view there has been created such an excellent growing up place for the children and opportunities for the angels that all in all this community is a great success."

PRACTICAL TIPS

Specific purposes

Drawing on my group facilitation training and discussions with several people who have sincere interest in and experience with spiritual support groups, I have concluded that one of the most important criteria for success is a clear purpose or purposes.

The Urantia Book states, "Just as certainly as men share their religious beliefs, they create a religious group of some sort which eventually creates common goals. Someday religionists will get together and actually effect co-operation on the basis of unity of ideals and purposes rather than attempting to do so on the basis of psychological opinions and theological beliefs." (p. 1091:6)

Perhaps one or a few persons with a clear idea of purpose will initiate the group and attract others who share their

purpose. Alternately, a compatible group of individuals with a less clearly defined purpose may get together and follow a process to clarify their purpose (or purposes). Either way, I believe it is essential to take whatever time is required to get consensus and clarity in relation to the purposes of the group and, unless all members share the same or very compatible purposes, the group is, in my opinion, doomed to fail or be dramatically less successful than it could have been. This is commonly an ongoing process and purposes often evolve and/or change over time, so provision should be made to allow for this growth of purpose.

The specific purpose or purposes of a given spiritual support group will be defined by the group members. Some examples of possible purposes and some thoughts on how the purposes might be actualized are:

1. *Support for learning to love more profoundly:* Since every relationship is an end in itself, developing loving relationships is an important purpose of every support group, regardless of other purposes the group may have. "And no amount of piety or creedal loyalty can compensate for the absence in the life experience of kingdom believers of that spontaneous, generous, and sincere friendliness which characterizes the spirit-born sons of the living God." (p. 1951:1) Thus, loving friendships should be the heart of any spiritual support group.

Furthermore, remember that many people learn to love God more by first learning to love their fellows more (p. 1727:4) and Jesus stated, "...it is this supreme law of love for God and for man that I also declare to you as constituting the whole duty of man." (p. 1600:1)

2. *Support for putting spiritual beliefs into action:* "If we know God, our real business on earth is so to live as to permit the Father to reveal himself in our lives, and thus will all God-seeking persons see the Father and ask for our help in finding out more about the God who in this manner finds expression in our lives." (p. 1466:2)

A group might have as its purpose promoting spiritual approaches to everyday living, encouraging members to transform their belief into action and solve material problems in spiritual ways. In this process, members are likely to uncover emotional issues such as insecurity, loneliness, fear and childhood contamination which have blocked their full expression of spirituality. They can be lovingly assisted in working through these emotional issues as they gain the courage and insight needed to live more spiritual lives.

Active listening, insightful feedback and expressions of love can help with emotional growth and spiritual problem solving. However, reminders of Jesus' teachings and other spiritual truths can be even more powerful.

A current member of a support group in Golden, Colorado, of which I am a member, stated, "A spiritual support group helps to keep one focused on truth and joy and higher

things. When you get to share that with others, life is so much better."

Another member of this group commented, "It just feels so safe, and that is so very valuable!"

One aspect of relief for me is knowing that in that group I am being viewed with "spiritual eyes." Group members respond to me from the same belief system, so they can truly help me further my spiritual goals.

Prayer can be a useful tool, as part of the group process, or as a recommended resource for members in making decisions. "Prayer, even as a purely human practice, a dialogue with one's alter ego, constitutes a technique of the most efficient approach to the realization of those reserve powers of human nature which are stored and conserved in the unconscious realms of the human mind. Prayer is a sound psychological practice, aside from its religious implications and its spiritual significance." (p. 999:7)

"Aside from all that is superself in the experience of praying, it should be remembered that ethical prayer is a splendid way to elevate one's ego and reinforce the self for better living and higher attainment. Prayer induces the human ego to look both ways for help: for material aid to the subconscious reservoir of mortal experience, for inspiration and guidance to the superconscious borders of the contact of the material with the spiritual, with the Mystery Monitor." (p. 997:3)

"Prayer elevates man because it is a technique of progressing by the utilization of the ascending spiritual currents of the universe. Genuine prayer adds to spiritual growth, modifies attitudes, and yields that satisfaction which comes from communion with divinity. It is a spontaneous outburst of God-consciousness. God answers man's prayer by giving him an increased revelation of truth, an enhanced appreciation of beauty, and an augmented concept of goodness." (p. 1002:1)

"Prayer is not a technique for curing real and organic diseases, but it has contributed enormously to the enjoyment of abundant health and to the cure of numerous mental, emotional, and nervous ailments. And even in actual bacterial disease, prayer has many times added to the efficacy of other remedial procedures." (p. 999:5)

"Prayer does not move the divine heart to liberality of bestowal, but it does so often dig out larger and deeper channels wherein the divine bestowals may flow to the hearts and souls of those who thus remember to maintain unbroken communion with their Maker through sincere prayer and true worship." (p. 2066:0)

However, "Prayer must never be so prostituted as to become a substitute for action. All ethical prayer is a stimulus to action and a guide to the progressive striving for idealistic goals of superself-attainment." (p. 997:7)

3. Support for constant connection with God: A support group may choose to use only spiritual tools, such as prayer, meditation and worship, to attempt the ultimate

step of living as Jesus did, in constant communion with God. Such a group's purpose might be to exchange one's mind for the mind of Jesus and to live always "as if in the presence of God." A group at this level will not intellectualize or deal with emotional issues. It will attempt to deal with spirituality in its purest sense. A Boulder resident interested in this type of support group, explains the purpose as, "Supporting each other in making the inner connection with God and living continually from that, rather than just focusing on what needs fixing in everyday life."

* * *

I am adding a paragraph here after hearing Dave and Marta Elders' presentation at the Wrightwood Series Seminar April 4, 1992. Their point about always "coming from the soul," making soul connection with everyone with whom we come in contact and becoming one through the Supreme is a profound statement of the goal of spiritual growth which I have been pursuing, however haltingly, for years. The Elders' explanation has become a new framework for the growth I am asking my support group to support.

* * *

4. Secondary support: The support function may be a by-product of a group with a worthwhile purpose not specifically defined as support for members. For example, Julio Edwards, a Denver *Urantia Book* reader, has produced a cable network television show called "Spiritual Spectrum" for over five years. Since September, 1986, he and his crew have aired and taped seventy-five one-hour religious and philosophical panel discussions featuring over 200 ministers, theologians, philosophers, scientists, artists, counselors, attorneys, teachers, directors and lay religionists. "The common thread of all shows," according to Julio, "has been the maintenance of a monthly forum for Denver's spiritual leaders to share their views with each other and the public and, in turn, thereby to learn to respect and appreciate the unity of spirit amongst such a marvelous variety of thinkers and communicators." The common goal is "the materialization of the brotherhood of man."

Julio explained that, in the process of producing the show, a very meaningful spiritual support network has naturally evolved. Among his newfound friends are practitioners of many spiritual approaches. He has also noted that, without any conscious organization or encouragement, people who have met through *Spiritual Spectrum* have initiated friendships and shared projects which nurture further realization of brotherhood. One of many examples is a mutual friendship among Julio, a Baptist minister and a Hare Krishna leader. Julio refers to this phenomenon as an "unconscious support group."

The Urantia Book is so clear about the value of service to religious growth that a group may adopt as its goal supporting each other in carrying out service projects together and as individuals. A service-oriented group will invariably find

that it also provides emotional support for its members.

An example of a spiritual service organization which provides personal support as a secondary benefit is Church Women United, an international interfaith organization. One of their well-publicized projects is the World Day of Prayer, which they have sponsored for 105 years. Chapters are active all over the world, providing service opportunities and fellowship for members.

A small group of *Urantia Book* readers in Boulder, Colorado, which recently formed with the stated purpose of becoming a spiritual support group, concluded after a few meetings that the best way to do this was to carry out service projects together.

The Denver-Boulder Women's Corps, a service organization of women who read *The Urantia Book*, has performed community service projects for over five years. They have found that, by doing service projects together, they also have formed a loving bond which is very rewarding. In the last couple of years, the group has added biannual retreats to further enhance this support function. After the last retreat, the group also initiated a weekly spiritual support group as a function separate from the service projects.

Traditional *Urantia Book* study groups may also fit this category of secondary support. While the study group may have as its primary purpose to help readers more fully understand the teachings of *The Urantia Book*, close friendships usually develop through study groups, and many readers find them very emotionally and spiritually supportive.

While, for some, this secondary benefit is sufficient, others will feel a need to organize a group with spiritual support as the primary focus.

Structure and ground rules

An adjunct to the illumination of purpose is establishing a structure and set of guidelines or ground rules. Some groups will prefer as few rules as possible; others will be most comfortable with a relatively pervasive structure. Regardless of what is finally adopted, each group must address the issues of structure and ground rules. Some groups will be most comfortable hashing out these concerns thoroughly before the group officially begins; others will resent taking too much time and getting too technical about these issues at the beginning and will prefer for them to unfold as the group proceeds. Either way, I believe two things are true: agreeing on structure and ground rules is part of the group process and should be handled in a way that is compatible with the purposes of the group; and the process is ongoing and will be present, formally or informally, throughout the life of the group. Included in this arena are decisions in areas such as the following:

1. Time: When and how often will the group meet? Will it meet for a specified number of weeks or will the duration be left open-ended? If no ending date is planned, how will the group know when it is time to end? If a specified

number of weeks is set, will there be an option to continue for another period of time if the group chooses to continue? Will each meeting have a specified beginning and ending time? If so, how serious should group members be about the commitment to begin and end on time and will any exceptions be entertained? If the ending time is not pre-set, how will the group know when to end and will individuals be free to leave at different times? How will the group time be allotted to individual participants? Will each individual be allowed approximately equal time to participate each meeting, or will variation in individual needs determine the amount of time each individual will be the focus of attention each meeting? Will a system be established for each person to indicate at the beginning of the meeting approximately how much time he/she anticipates wanting to take later, to help plan the use of time for that meeting?

2. Space: Where will the group meet? Will the meeting space be consistent or rotating? How will seating be arranged?

3. Creature comforts: Will refreshments be available before, during and/or after the meetings? If so, what kind of refreshments will be provided and by whom? Will they be available in the actual meeting room or in an adjoining room? What lighting will be best? Will it vary for different parts of the meeting? How will the temperature be controlled? Will breaks be built in or will individuals be encouraged to use the restroom as needed?

How will smoking be handled? Will members be allowed to participate if under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

4. Membership: How many members should be included? Should a minimum and/or maximum number be set? How should members be recruited/accepted? What criteria, if any, should be used to accept or reject members? Who should decide whether or not an individual is allowed to become a member? Should the group be homogeneous or heterogeneous in regard to age, sex, marital status, religious beliefs/practices, etc.? Should members be allowed to join at any time, only the first meeting of each month, only at the beginning of a time block such as a three-month period, only at the time the group is established, etc.? What provisions, if any, should be established to allow the group to expel a member? What guidelines, if any, should be followed by a member who decides to terminate participation in the group?

5. Leadership: Will there be an established leader or facilitator? If so, how will he/she be chosen? If so, what will his/her role entail? Will the leadership/facilitation roles be shared among members? If so, how will these roles be defined and distributed? Will the group be defined as "leaderless" and each member be expected to help facilitate and keep the group focused on its purpose? What provisions will be made to adjust leadership if one or more members perceive a need for a change?

6. Format: Will the group adopt/adapt a format used by some currently successful group with similar purposes?

Will the group structure evolve through group process? Will format and structure be decided in advance or will the group begin with only the intent and desires of members and let everything else unfold? Will the format be formal or informal? Will part of the leadership/facilitation role be to insure adherence to the accepted structure? Will the format/structure be planned as a framework for all meetings, or will each meeting be open for format suggestions on a spontaneous basis? If the structure is relatively consistent from meeting to meeting, will there be tolerance and provision for variations?

7. Commitment: To what extent will members be expected to commit to regular attendance? Will they be free to "drop in" or miss meetings spontaneously, or will they be expected to attend each meeting unless an emergency arises? Will members be expected to let someone know if they will not be attending a particular meeting? Will a provision be established to update members who miss a meeting on what happens in the meeting while they are gone? Will members commit to attempting to resolve conflicts (through a chosen conflict resolution process) rather than just dropping out if dissatisfied? Will a consequence be established for those who fail to meet the level of commitment agreed upon by the group?

8. Trust building: To what extent is a high trust level necessary to accomplish the group's purpose? If it is important, what will be done to build/increase the trust level among members?

Will confidentiality be a norm? If so, will it extend to not discussing what happens in group with members who are absent for a given meeting? What do members need to feel safe in the group? How do group members define support? How does the definition of support change as the group matures?

9. Maintenance: What provisions will be built in to assure that the group continues to fulfill its purpose and meet the needs of the members? Will a system of feedback be incorporated which encourages members to share, on a regular or ongoing basis, their degree of satisfaction with the functioning of the group? If the group has an established leader and he/she either resigns or is removed, what contingency will be available to prevent the group's demise?

If a conflict develops, how will it be handled? If communication problems develop within the group, how will the issue be brought up and dealt with? Will communication skills and/or group process training opportunities be made available to members? If hidden agendas are suspected, how will they be dealt with? How will the evolution of the group be nurtured so that members are unafraid to accommodate healthy changes?

Suggested formats

Each group will decide what format and structure to follow and how formally or informally they prefer to operate. The format must be designed to facilitate the purpose(s) of the

group. This section presents some suggestions for formats.

Basic sharing group: A simple format I have seen used effectively for a spiritual support group with the purposes of enhancing loving relationships and encouraging spiritual problem solving follows the schedule below:

1. Begin with a few minutes of silence or meditation.
2. Give each member a few minutes to share what is relevant from his/her life since the last meeting and to indicate whether he/she would like, later in the meeting, to spend more time sharing and getting feedback and support.
3. Devote the bulk of the meeting to the needs of individuals who asked for time during the opening round. Each person explains his/her relevant experiences, concerns and/or progress and lets the group know what he/she would like from them in response. The group offers feedback, reflection, relevant personal experience, loving comfort, reminders of spiritual wisdom from Jesus' teaching, etc. as fits the individual's needs.
4. The group ends with a few minutes of silence or perhaps with hugs or a group hug.

A variation on this general format is to decide in advance that each member will have an equal portion of the group time, thus making the opening round unnecessary. With this approach it may be necessary to assign someone as a timekeeper to tactfully keep people basically within their time allotment.

"Master Mind" group: The Church of Religious Science offers "Master Mind Groups" which have been very beneficial to many members. The groups meet for a set period of twelve weeks and expect regular attendance from participants. At the end of the twelve weeks, members can choose to continue for another twelve-week period. One group in Michigan, for example, has been meeting for over five years.

The group has a trained facilitator, who leads trust-building exercises at the first meeting and explains the ongoing format. The basic structure is for members to share what they are working on in their daily lives and then the group prays together for the real needs of each individual, in essence giving the issues to God (or the Master Mind as they call it). A seven-step process is followed to help formulate successful prayers. In addition, each group member is asked to take time each day between meetings to focus on each group member and review that person's needs and give them to God.

Group time is also used for members to share how the issues of others affect them and to share relevant common experiences; however, intellectualizing, suggesting techniques and trying to "fix" the other person are considered inappropriate.

According to one twelve-week participant in Boulder, "It was surprising how quickly people got to know each other and how much people opened up. I would say the group

was near the state of real community, as Scott Peck defines community, by the end of the twelve weeks."

For more information on this format, contact the nearest Church of Religious Science.

Inner guidance group: A recent Boulder resident described a spiritual support group which he had organized a few years ago in San Francisco using meditation and following inner guidance as its basis. Although the group ended when he and another member left (partly because they had been meeting at the houses of these departing members), he felt it was very beneficial for the six months that it met.

He described the group as very homogeneous in their focus of living by inner guidance. The format included short meditations at the beginning and end of each group, with the rest of the meeting consisting of sharing by each of the 10 group members about what was meaningful in their lives during the intervening week and any issues they were working on. Group members gave input about what was "coming through" them (insight from their higher selves), reflecting the individual back to himself. They did not give advice, only interpretations and insights and respected the supremacy of the individuals' inner guidance.

He explained the benefits as "facilitating people to become clear on their purposes and intentions, and moving on them, not being blocked by human behaviors, and helping people reconnect to the principles they had forgotten, along with discharging emotions." He found that the emotional discharge could be done very quickly in the context of spiritual intent.

He also joined a spiritual support group in Boulder and described the primary benefit as, "to express as much as I am aware of what my self is working on at that time." He added, "The process of articulating in a concise fashion the comprehensiveness of my awareness helps me become further aware of insights and patterns of that inner working. Of course, others' observations are also valuable. The primary means is for each person to maintain connection to his/her higher center for the whole meeting. Another benefit that can and has accrued is for individual group members to keep in mind another's expressed desires and act on one of them during the week between meetings to allow for another's movement to take place."

Twelve or twenty-one step group: Another format which might be considered as a starting point for a spiritual support group is the one used in twelve-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Twelve-step groups are all broadly spiritual in nature. They have been the instrument for thousands of individuals to acknowledge the need for and the power of God in their lives.

Alternately, the book *21 Steps to Spiritual Awakening* by Harry McMullan could provide the foundation for a spiritual support group. It is an expansion of the twelve-step approach, with a focus on teachings from *The Urantia*

Book. A group meeting weekly could progress through the twenty-one steps in about six months. The book is published by ASOKA Foundation, 6305 Waterford Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73118.

Resonating Core group: Another well-developed format which could be adopted or adapted is described in *Love At The Core: A Guide to the Resonating Group Experience* by Christopher Hills, Ph.D, Barbara Marx Hubbard and the staff of The Center for Resonating Cores. It outlines a twelve-week program for forming a "resonating core group," through creating loving relationships. The book is available from The Center for Resonating Cores, P.O. Box 867, Boulder Creek, California 95006. The phone number is (408) 338-6990.

Another book by Hills on resonating cores is *How to Create a Core Group: The Next Step in Human Evolution*. This book explains twelve essential attitudes and provides a series of lessons designed to help members reach a "state of co-creation, a state of harmony with God" through deepening love among members. Hills explains, "When an individual surrenders totally to the experience of pure love, he or she becomes a part of the intention of creation." (p. 7)

The address listed in this book is The University of the Trees, P.O. Box 347, Boulder Creek, California 95006. The phone number is (408) 338-9362.

A small group in Denver recently followed the process described in Hills' book, meeting for almost a year. One of the members of this group described the experience as a spiritual growth group in which meditation, trust-building exercises, and shared inner experiences were integral parts. She found the group extremely beneficial and said she experienced some of the most profound meditations of her life as part of the process.

Recommendations and resources

I do not pretend to be an expert on spiritual support groups, nor do I believe that any one person has all of the answers for a sincere individual or group who wants to start a spiritual support group. Jesus encouraged the Apostles to work out their own organizational details, under the leadership of Andrew, and he declined to step in when Andrew or Abner came to him with problems between the Apostles and the followers of John the Baptist.

While each group must work out what fits for its members, I offer the following recommendations gleaned from reading, personal experience, and interviews with others who have had experience with support groups.

For some, the suggestions in this paper may be most helpful after they organize a support group and find that it is not working as well as they had hoped; they may gain some insight into why the group is not as effective as it could be.

In my experience and that of those I have interviewed, successful unfacilitated groups are rare and usually work only if all members are good communicators and fairly knowledgeable about effective group process and are all

very compatible in their needs and understanding of the purpose of the group. *The Urantia Book* states, "The fact of man's gregariousness perforce determines that religious groups will come into existence. What happens to these religious groups depends very much on intelligent leadership." (p. 1090:10)

While a "leader," in the sense of someone with special training or added authority, is not always necessary, it is important to have a facilitator or focalizer to help keep the group focused on its purpose and functioning effectively. Facilitation may rotate if more than one individual is comfortable in that role.

A totally laissez faire group is also rarely successful in the long run; beginning with a few clearly defined guidelines is recommended, to keep the group focused on its purpose and to equalize the benefits to all members. At some point, the group may transcend the guidelines or so fully integrate them that they may be less formally followed.

I highly recommend that a group begin with an established format adopted or adapted from another successful group. Over time, the group may make changes to fit its needs, but having a "tried and true" format to begin with can help the group progress more quickly.

Commitment is also typically essential to assure a group's longevity—commitment both to regular attendance and to the purpose of the group. I recommend a policy precluding "unresolved exits." If a group member decides not to participate further, I believe it is important for him/her to explain his/her reasons to the group and give an opportunity to resolve any unfinished business with group members.

It may also be worthwhile to spend some time with communication skill training, since people, even with the best of intentions, may naturally fall into habits which interfere with group effectiveness, such as giving unwanted advice. Providing members with an understanding of group process and the stages of group development may also be helpful. Many books are available on these topics. Organizational development classes or seminars may also be available in your area.

Assuring that members understand group process can "set the group up" for success so they don't become threatened and disband when the group finds itself in a necessary stage of temporary disharmony.

M. Scott Peck has become a national consultant on community building since publishing *The Different Drum—Community Making and Peace* in 1987. I highly recommend this book to anyone involved in creating a spiritual support group. In it he describes the stages any group must go through in order to achieve "true community."

In an article in the September 15, 1989 issue of *Bottom Line/Personal* (published by Boardroom Reports, Inc. at 330 W. 42 St., New York 10036), Peck summarized the stages of community building as follows:

"Pseudo-community. During this stage, the group tries to

fake it by avoiding conflict. Everyone is on his best behavior, trying not to offend the other members. Individual differences are denied, and everyone keeps his feelings to himself.

"Chaos. This stage is a free-for-all in which the group tries to fight things out. Individual differences are right out in the open. Only now—instead of hiding them—the group tries to obliterate them by converting each other...

"Although chaos is often viewed as negative, fighting is a lot better than pretending to agree.

"Most groups emerge from this stage by organizing—electing committees and chairpeople. But an organization isn't a community.

"Emptiness. In this, the most crucial stage on the road to community, the group breaks down all barriers to communication. This means dropping expectations, preconceptions and prejudices and eliminating the need to control, convert or solve problems. It means celebrating rather than trying to change individual differences...

"As a group moves toward emptiness, its members start to share their defeats, failures, doubts, fears and inadequacies—a process that can be quite painful. Although it feels like the group is dying, it's really being reborn.

"Community. Once emptiness has been achieved, the group becomes a community. People become quiet and peaceful. They feel sad and joyful at the same time. It's a lot like falling in love.

"Ironic. Once no one is trying to heal or convert anyone anymore, an extraordinary amount of healing and converting goes on.

"After a community has been formed, we graduate to community-maintenance. Agreements are written about how to sustain a sense of community, even though the group may occasionally fall back into chaos or pseudo-community. **Key:** Even the strongest groups will need to go through the agonizing process over and over again." (p. 2)

Groups often fall apart when they reach the "chaos" stage because they do not realize that it is a normal part of their evolution and they do not know how to move through it. Peck offers the assurance, and the requisite techniques, to help a group through this stage.

The Apostles are a good example of a group which weathered the stages of chaos and emptiness to become true community. "They learned to differ, to debate, to contend, to pray, and to compromise, and throughout it all to remain sympathetic with the other person's viewpoint and to maintain at least some degree of tolerance for his honest opinions." (p. 1625:8)

The "emptiness" stage to which Peck refers is essentially emptying oneself of judgments and beliefs that others must change. One must become like God in his ability to accept each individual. "God loves each individual as an indi-

vidual child in the heavenly family. Yet God thus loves every individual; he is no respecter of persons, and the universality of his love brings into being a relationship of the whole, the universal brotherhood." (p. 138:3)

This becomes easy if each group member remembers one of the Apostles' important lessons. "Increasingly they learned from Jesus to look upon human personalities in terms of their possibilities in time and in eternity." (p. 1727:4)

Jesus explained, "Spiritual unity is derived from the consciousness that each of you is indwelt, and increasingly dominated, by the spirit gift of the heavenly Father. Your apostolic harmony must grow out of the fact that the spirit hope of each of you is identical in origin, nature and destiny." (p. 1591:6) And again, he said, "The only *uniform* thing about men is the indwelling spirit. Though divine spirits may vary somewhat in the nature and extent of their experience, they react uniformly to all spiritual appeals. Only through, and by appeal to, this spirit can mankind ever attain unity and brotherhood." (p. 1672:6)

Peck, with others, also founded The Foundation for Community Encouragement, Inc., which defines community as "a group of two or more people who, regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds (social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc.) have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together toward goals identified as being for their common good."

Information about this foundation and its services and training opportunities is available by writing to The Foundation for Community Encouragement, Inc. 109 Danbury Road, Suite 8, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877. The phone number is (203) 431-9349.

Another resource which was mentioned to me by several people is The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, an ecumenical Christian organization which provides spiritual guidance programs and group leaders programs, along with a variety of other classes, groups and workshops at its center in Washington, D.C. Among its activities are, according to one of its brochures, "long-term groups that provide an environment of support and encouragement for prayer and meditation and a variety of ways to help us attend God's grace in our lives," as well as short-term workshops, quiet days and retreats.

The address is Shalem Foundation for Spiritual Formation, Mount St. Alban, Washington, D. C. 20016. The phone number is (202) 966-7050.

Many more valuable resources are undoubtedly available and many other individuals have certainly had spiritual support group experiences worth recounting. My intention in making this presentation is to nurture discussion and action toward furthering more successful spiritual support group experiences for a wide variety of believers.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES

The following quotes from *The Urantia Book* offer suggestions relevant to the functioning of a spiritual support group.

"Trust is the crucial test of will creatures. Trust-worthiness is the true measure of self-mastery, character." (p. 315:6)

"'Coming up through great tribulation' serves to make glorified mortals very kind and understanding, very sympathetic and tolerant." (p. 538:5)

"One of the functions of humor is to help all of us take ourselves less seriously. *Humor is the divine antidote for exaltation of ego.*" (p. 549:2)

"Humor should function as an automatic safety valve to prevent the building up of excessive pressures due to the monotony of sustained and serious self-contemplation in association with the intense struggle for developmental progress and noble achievement. Humor also functions to lessen the shock of the unexpected impact of fact or of truth, rigid unyielding fact and flexible ever-living truth. The mortal personality, never sure as to which will next be encountered, through humor swiftly grasps—sees the point and achieves insight—the unexpected nature of the situation be it facts or be it truth.

"While the humor of Urantia is exceedingly crude and most inartistic, it does serve a valuable purpose both as a health insurance and as a liberator of emotional pressure, thus preventing injurious nervous tension and overserious self-contemplation." (p. 549:5)

"14. Whet the appetites of your associates for truth; give advice only when it is asked for." (p. 556:16)

"26. Knowledge is possessed only by sharing; it is safeguarded by wisdom and socialized by love." (p. 557:12)

"The sense or feeling of guilt is the consciousness of the violation of the mores; it is not necessarily sin. There is no real sin in the absence of conscious disloyalty to Deity.

"The possibility of the recognition of the sense of guilt is a badge of transcendent distinction for mankind. It does not mark man as mean but rather sets him apart as a creature of potential greatness and ever-ascending glory. Such a sense of unworthiness is the initial stimulus that should lead quickly and surely to those faith conquests which translate the mortal mind to the superb levels of moral nobility, cosmic insight, and spiritual living; thus are all the meanings of human existence changed from the temporal to the eternal, and all values are elevated from the human to the divine.

"The confession of sin is a manful repudiation of disloyalty, but it in no wise mitigates the time-space consequences of such disloyalty. But confession—sincere recognition of the nature of sin—is essential to religious growth and spiritual progress." (p. 984:6)

"But if religion is to stimulate individual development of character and augment integration of personality, it must

not be standardized. If it is to stimulate evaluation of experience and serve as a value-lure, it must not be stereotyped. If religion is to promote supreme loyalties, it must not be formalized." (p. 1089:11)

"If you love your fellow man, you must have discovered their values. Jesus loved men so much because he placed such a high value upon them. You can best discover values in your associates by discovering their motivation. If someone irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct. If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and this tolerance will grow into friendship and ripen into love." (p. 1098:1)

"There really is a true and genuine inner voice, that 'true light which lights every man who comes into the world.' And this spirit leading is distinct from the ethical prompting of human conscience. The feeling of religious assurance is more than an emotional feeling. The assurance of religion transcends the reason of the mind, even the logic of philosophy. Religion is faith, trust, and assurance." (p. 1104:3)

"The divine spirit makes contact with mortal man, not by feelings or emotions, but in the realm of the highest and most spiritualized thinking. It is your thoughts, not your feelings, that lead you Godward." (p. 1104:6)

"Religion lives and prospers, then, not by sight and feeling, but rather by faith and insight. It consists not in the discovery of new facts or in the finding of a unique experience but rather in the discovery of new and spiritual meanings in facts already well known to mankind. The highest religious experience is not dependent on prior acts of belief, tradition, and authority; neither is religion the offspring of sublime feelings and purely mystical emotions. It is, rather, a profoundly deep and actual experience of spiritual communion with the spirit influences resident within the human mind, and as far as such an experience is definable in terms of psychology, it is simply the experience of experiencing the reality of believing in God as the reality of such a purely personal experience." (p. 1105:1)

"Faith never shuns the problem-solving duty of mortal living. Living faith does not foster bigotry, persecution, or intolerance." (p. 1115:0)

"Do not make the mistake of judging another's religion by your own standards of knowledge and truth." (p. 1115:3)

"A group of mortals can experience spiritual unity, but they can never attain philosophic uniformity." (p. 1129:8)

"All men recognize the morality of this universal human urge to be unselfish and altruistic. The humanist ascribes the origin of this urge to the natural working of the material mind; the religionist more correctly recognizes that the truly unselfish drive of mortal mind is in response to the inner spirit leadings of the Thought Adjuster.

"But man's interpretation of these early conflicts between the ego-will and the other-than-self-will is not always dependable. Only a fairly well unified personality can

arbitrate the multiform contentions of the ego cravings and the budding social consciousness. The self has rights as well as one's neighbors. Neither has exclusive claims upon the attention and service of the individual. Failure to resolve this problem gives origin to the earliest type of human guilt feelings.

"Human happiness is achieved only when the ego desire of the self and the altruistic urge of the higher self (divine spirit) are co-ordinated and reconciled by the unified will of the integrating and supervising personality. The mind of evolutionary man is ever confronted with the intricate problem of refereeing the contest between the natural expansion of emotional impulses and the moral growth of unselfish urges predicated on spiritual insight—genuine religious reflection.

"The attempt to secure equal good for the self and for the greatest number of other selves presents a problem which cannot always be satisfactorily resolved in a time-space frame." (p. 1134:1)

"But man is not saved or ennobled by pressure. Spirit growth springs from within the evolving soul. Pressure may deform the personality but it never stimulates growth. Even educational pressure is only negatively helpful in that it may aid in the prevention of disastrous experience. Spiritual growth is greatest where all external pressures are at a minimum. 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.' Man develops best when the pressures of home, community, church, and state are least. But this must not be construed as meaning that there is no place in a progressive society for home, social institutions, church and state." (p. 1135:1)

"The security of a religious group depends on spiritual unity, not on theological uniformity. A religious group should be able to enjoy the liberty of freethinking without having to become 'freethinkers.'" (p. 1135:2)

"Nothing in the entire universe can substitute for the fact of experience on nonexistential levels." (p. 1185:2)

"I cannot but observe that so many of you spend so much time and thought on mere trifles of living, while you almost wholly overlook the more essential realities of everlasting import, those very accomplishments which are concerned with the development of a more harmonious working agreement between you and your Adjuster. The great goal of human existence is to attune to the divinity of the indwelling Adjuster; the great achievement of mortal life is the attainment of a true and understanding consecration to the eternal aims of the divine spirit who waits and works within your mind. But a devoted and determined effort to realize eternal destiny is wholly compatible with a light-hearted and joyous life and with a successful and honorable career on earth. Co-operation with the Thought Adjuster does not entail self-torture, mock piety, or hypocritical and ostentatious self-abasement; the ideal life is one of loving service rather than an existence of fearful apprehension." (p. 1206:2)

"Sharing is Godlike—divine." (p. 1221:2)

"Of all the dangers which beset man's mortal nature and jeopardize his spiritual integrity, pride is the greatest. Courage is valorous, but egotism is vainglorious and suicidal. Reasonable self-confidence is not to be deplored. Man's ability to transcend himself is the one thing which distinguishes him from the animal kingdom.

"Pride is deceitful, intoxicating, and sin-breeding whether found in an individual, a group, a race, or a nation. It is literally true, 'Pride goes before a fall.'" (p. 1223:1)

"To become mature is to live more intensely in the present, at the same time escaping from the limitations of the present. The plans of maturity, founded on past experience, are coming into being in the present in such manner as to enhance the values of the future." (p. 1295:7)

"Many human reactions are mechanical in nature; much of life is machinelike. But man, a mechanism, is much more than a machine; he is mind endowed and spirit indwelt; and though he can never throughout his material life escape the chemical and electrical mechanics of his existence, he can increasingly learn how to subordinate this physical-life machine to the directive wisdom of experience by the process of consecrating the human mind to the execution of the spiritual urges of the indwelling Thought Adjuster." (p. 1301:7)

"Jesus possessed the ability effectively to mobilize all his powers of mind, soul, and body on the task immediately in hand. He could concentrate his deep-thinking mind on the one problem which he wished to solve, and this, in connection with his untiring *patience*, enabled him serenely to endure the trials of a difficult mortal existence—to live as if he were 'seeing Him who is invisible.'" (p. 1400:7)

"There was something gracious and inspiring about the personality of Jesus which invariably attracted young people. He always made them feel at ease in his presence. Perhaps his great secret in getting along with them consisted in the twofold fact that he was always interested in what they were doing, while he seldom offered them advice unless they asked for it." (p. 1420:7)

"If you truly want to find God, that desire is in itself evidence that you have already found him. Your trouble is not that you cannot find God, for the Father has already found you; your trouble is simply that you do not know God." (p. 1440:2)

"And this was his method of instruction: Never once did he attack their errors or even mention the flaws in their teachings. In each case he would select the truth in what they taught and then proceed so to embellish and illuminate this truth in their minds that in a very short time this enhancement of the truth effectively crowded out the associated error;" (p. 1456:0)

"As a rule, to those he taught the most, he said the least. Those who derived most benefit from his personal ministry were overburdened, anxious, and dejected mortals who

gained much relief because of the opportunity to unburden their souls to a sympathetic and understanding listener, and he was all that and more. And when these maladjusted human beings had told Jesus about their troubles, always was he able to offer practical and immediately helpful suggestions looking toward the correction of their real difficulties, albeit he did not neglect to speak words of present comfort and immediate consolation. And invariably would he tell these distressed mortals about the love of God and impart the information, by various and sundry methods, that they were the children of this loving Father in heaven." (p. 1460:6)

"Give the milk of truth to those who are babes in spiritual perception. In your living and loving ministry serve spiritual food in attractive form and suited to the capacity of receptivity of each of your inquirers." (p. 1474:2)

"In the coming kingdom, be not mindful of those things which foster your anxiety but rather at all times concern yourselves only with doing the will of the Father who is in heaven." (p. 1525:3)

"Ever his exhortation to the apostles was: 'Go seek for the sinners; find the downhearted and comfort the anxious.'" (p. 1543:2)

"These five months of work with Jesus led these apostles, each one of them, to regard him as the best friend he had in all the world. And it was this human sentiment, and not his superb teachings or marvelous doings, that held them together until after the resurrection and the renewal of the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom." (p. 1546:3)

"This 'son of thunder' became the 'apostle of love'; and at Ephesus, when the aged bishop was no longer able to stand in the pulpit and preach but had to be carried to church in a chair, and when at the close of the service he was asked to say a few words to the believers, for years his only utterance was, 'My little children, love one another.'" (p. 1554:4)

"And it will not be so much by the words you speak as by the lives you live that men will know you have been with me and have learned of the realities of the kingdom." (p. 1569:4)

"It is a great error to teach boys and young men that it is unmanly to show tenderness or otherwise to give evidence of emotional feeling or physical suffering. Sympathy is a worthy attribute of the male as well as the female. It is not necessary to be callused in order to be manly... Being sensitive and responsive to human need creates genuine and lasting happiness, while such kindly attitudes safeguard the soul from the destructive influences of anger, hate, and suspicion." (p. 1575:1)

"What he aimed at in his life appears to have been a *superb self-respect*. He only advised man to humble himself that he might become truly exalted; what he really aimed at was true humility toward God. He placed great value upon sincerity—a pure heart. Fidelity was a cardinal virtue in his

estimate of character, while *courage* was the very heart of his teachings. 'Fear not' was his watchword, and patient endurance his ideal of strength of character." (p. 1582:1)

"Jesus knew men were different, and he so taught his apostles. He constantly exhorted them to refrain from trying to mold the disciples and believers according to some set pattern. He sought to allow each soul to develop in its own way, a perfecting and separate individual before God." (p. 1582:7)

"The Master taught them much about the whole man—the union of body, mind, and spirit to form the individual man or woman." (p. 1590:7)

"Many times during the training of the twelve Jesus reverted to this theme. Repeatedly he told them it was not his desire that those who believed in him should become dogmatized and standardized in accordance with the religious interpretations of even good men. Again and again he warned his apostles against the formulation of creeds and the establishment of traditions as a means of guiding and controlling believers in the gospel of the kingdom." (p. 1592:2)

"When Simon Zelotes and Jesus were alone, Simon asked the Master: 'Why is it that I could not persuade him? Why did he so resist me and so readily lend an ear to you?' Jesus answered: 'Simon, Simon, how many times have I instructed you to refrain from all efforts to take something *out* of the hearts of those who seek salvation? How often have I told you to labor only to put something *into* these hungry souls? Lead men into the kingdom, and the great and living truths of the kingdom will presently drive out all serious error. When you have presented to mortal man the good news that God is his Father, you can the easier persuade him that he is in reality a son of God... I came not to take away that which you had from your forefathers but to show you the perfected vision of that which your fathers saw only in part. Go then, Simon, teaching and preaching the kingdom, and when you have a man safely and securely within the kingdom, then is the time, when such a one shall come to you with inquiries, to impart instruction having to do with the progressive advancement of the soul within the divine kingdom.'" (p. 1592:4)

"You must realize that the best method of solving some entangled problems is to forsake them for a time." (p. 1611:1)

"They had made the important discovery that many human perplexities are in reality nonexistent, that many pressing troubles are the creations of exaggerated fear and the offspring of augmented apprehension. They had learned that all such perplexities are best handled by being forsaken; by going off they had left such problems to solve themselves." (p. 1611:4)

"His message was so compelling! While he made no appeal to human authority, he did speak directly to the consciences and souls of men. Though he did not resort to logic, legal quibbles, or clever sayings, he did make a

powerful, direct, clear, and personal appeal to the hearts of his hearers." (p. 1632:2)

"The important thing is not the rapidity of your progress but rather its certainty. Your actual achievement is not so important as the fact that the *direction* of your progress is Godward. What you are becoming day by day is of infinitely more importance than what you are today." (p. 1653:1)

"To pray is natural for the children of light, but fasting is not a part of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven." (p. 1655:4)

"Many of the cures effected by Jesus in connection with his ministry in behalf of Elman's patients did, indeed, appear to resemble the working of miracles, but we were instructed that they were only just such transformations of mind and spirit as may occur in the experience of expectant and faith-dominated persons who are under the immediate and inspirational influence of a strong, positive, and beneficent personality whose ministry banishes fear and destroys anxiety." (p. 1658:5)

"His ear was ever open to the sorrows of mankind, and he always helped those who sought his ministry." (p. 1671:1)

"He engaged in the destruction of that which was only when he simultaneously offered his fellows the superior thing which *ought to be*." (p. 1672:0)

"Anger indicates your lack of tolerant brotherly love plus your lack of self-respect and self-control. Anger depletes the health, debases the mind, and handicaps the spirit teacher of man's soul.... Let your hearts be so dominated by love that your spirit guide will have little trouble in delivering you from the tendency to give vent to those outbursts of animal anger which are inconsistent with the status of divine sonship." (p. 1673:3)

"He called attention to the fact that any virtue, if carried to extremes, may become a vice. Jesus always preached temperance and taught consistency—proportionate adjustment of life problems. He pointed out that overmuch sympathy and pity may degenerate into serious emotional instability; that enthusiasm may drive on into fanaticism. He discussed one of their former associates whose imagination had led him off into visionary and impractical undertakings. At the same time he warned them against the dangers of the dullness of over-conservative mediocrity.

"And then Jesus discoursed on the dangers of courage and faith, how they sometimes lead unthinking souls on to recklessness and presumption. He also showed how prudence and discretion, when carried too far, lead to cowardice and failure. He exhorted his hearers to strive for originality while they shunned all tendency toward eccentricity. He pleaded for sympathy without sentimentality, piety without sanctimoniousness. He taught reverence free from fear and superstition." (p. 1673:4-5)

"Always respect the personality of man. Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force; spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power. This injunction against the employment of material influences refers to psychic

force as well as to physical force. Overpowering arguments and mental superiority are not to be employed to coerce men and women into the kingdom. Man's mind is not to be crushed by the mere weight of logic or overawed by shrewd eloquence. While emotion as a factor in human decisions cannot be wholly eliminated, it should not be directly appealed to in the teachings of those who would advance the cause of the kingdom. Make your appeals directly to the divine spirit that dwells within the minds of men. Do not appeal to fear, pity, or mere sentiment...

"In bringing men into the kingdom, do not lessen or destroy their self-respect." (p. 1765:4)

"Of all the sorrows of a trusting man, none is so terrible as to be 'wounded in the house of a trusted friend.'" (p. 1677:1)

"You see, my children, the appeal to human feelings is transitory and utterly disappointing; the exclusive appeal to the intellect of man is likewise empty and barren; it is only by making your appeal to the spirit which lives within the human mind that you can hope to achieve lasting success and accomplish those marvelous transformations of human character that are presently shown in the abundant yielding of the genuine fruits of the spirit in the daily lives of all who are thus delivered from the darkness of doubt by the birth of the spirit into the light of faith—the kingdom of heaven." (p. 1705:2)

"Jesus fully understood how men prepare themselves for the decisions of a crisis and the performance of sudden deeds of courageous choosing by the slow process of the reiterated choosing between the recurring situations of good and evil. He subjected his chosen messengers to repeated rehearsals in disappointment and provided them with frequent and testing opportunities for choosing between the right and the wrong way of meeting spiritual trials. He knew he could depend on his followers, when they met the final test, to make their vital decisions in accordance with prior and habitual mental attitudes and spirit reactions." (p. 1708:2)

"The most effective of all social groups is the family, more particularly the *two parents*. Personal affection is the spiritual bond which holds together these material associations. Such an effective relationship is also possible between two persons of the same sex, as is so abundantly illustrated in the devotions of genuine friendship.

"These associations of friendship and mutual affection are socializing and ennobling because they encourage and facilitate the following essential factors of the higher levels of the art of living:

"1. *Mutual self-expression and self-understanding*. Many noble human impulses die because there is no one to hear their expression. Truly, it is not good for man to be alone....

"2. *Union of souls*—the mobilization of wisdom. Every human being sooner or later acquires a certain concept of this world and a certain vision of the next. Now it is

possible, through personality association, to unite these views of temporal existence and eternal prospects. Thus does the mind of one augment its spiritual values by gaining much of the insight of the other. In this way men enrich the soul by pooling their respective spiritual possessions. Likewise, in this same way man is enabled to avoid that ever-present tendency to fall victim to distortion of vision, prejudice of viewpoint and narrowness of judgment. Fear, envy, and conceit can be prevented only by intimate contact with other minds. I call your attention to the fact that the Master never sends you out alone to labor for the extension of the kingdom. He always sends you out two and two. And since wisdom is superknowledge, it follows that, in the union of wisdom, the social group, small or large, mutually shares all knowledge.

"3. *The enthusiasm for living*. Isolation tends to exhaust the energy charge of the soul. Association with one's fellows is essential to the renewal of the zest for life and is indispensable to the maintenance of the courage to fight those battles consequent upon the ascent to the higher levels of human living. Friendship enhances the joys and glorifies the triumphs of life. Loving and intimate human associations tend to rob suffering of its sorrow and hardship of much of its bitterness. The presence of a friend enhances all beauty and exalts every goodness. By intelligent symbols man is able to quicken and enlarge the appreciative power and possibility of the mutual stimulation of the imagination. Great spiritual power is inherent in the consciousness of wholehearted devotion to a common cause, mutual loyalty to a cosmic Deity.

"4. *The enhanced defense against all evil*. Personality association and mutual affection is an efficient insurance against evil. Difficulties, sorrow, disappointment, and defeat are more painful and disheartening when born alone. Association does not transmute evil into righteousness, but it does aid in greatly lessening the sting. Said your Master, 'Happy are they who mourn'—if a friend is at hand to comfort. There is positive strength in the knowledge that you live for the welfare of others, and that these others likewise live for your welfare and advancement. Man languishes in isolation. Human beings unfailingly become discouraged when they view only the transitory transactions of time. The present, when divorced from the past and the future, becomes exasperatingly trivial. Only a glimpse of the circle of eternity can inspire man to do his best and can challenge the best in him to do its utmost. And when man is thus at his best, he lives most unselfishly for the good of others, his fellow sojourners in time and eternity.

"I repeat, such inspiring and ennobling association finds its ideal possibilities in the human marriage relation. True, much is attained out of marriage, and many, many marriages utterly fail to produce these moral and spiritual fruits. ...And thus, if you can build up such trustworthy and effective small units of human association, when these are assembled in the aggregate, the world will behold a great and glorified social structure, the civilization of mortal

maturity. Such a race might begin to realize something of your Master's ideal of 'peace on earth and good will among men.' While such a society would not be perfect or entirely free from evil it would at least approach the stabilization of maturity." (pp. 1775-77)

"Jesus was never in a hurry. He had time to comfort his fellow men 'as he passed by.' And he always made his friends feel at ease. He was a charming listener. He never engaged in the meddlesome probing of the souls of his associates. As he comforted hungry minds and ministered to thirsty souls, the recipients of his mercy did not so much feel that they were confessing to him as that they were conferring with him. They had unbounded confidence in him because they saw he had so much faith in them.

"He never seemed to be curious about people, and he never manifested a desire to direct, manage, or follow them up. He inspired profound self-confidence and robust courage in all who enjoyed his association. When he smiled on a man, that mortal experience increased capacity for solving his manifold problems.

"Jesus loved men so much and so wisely that he never hesitated to be severe with them when the occasion demanded such discipline. He frequently set out to help a person by asking for help. In this way he elicited interest, appealed to the better things in human nature.

"...Great things happened not only because people had faith in Jesus, but also because Jesus had so much faith in them.

"Most of the really important things which Jesus said or did seemed to happen casually, 'as he passed by.' There was so little of the professional, the well-planned, or the pre-meditated in the Master's earthly ministry. He dispensed health and scattered happiness naturally and gracefully as he journeyed through life. It was literally true, 'He went about doing good.'

And it behooves the Master's followers in all ages to learn to minister as 'they pass by'—to do unselfish good as they go about their daily duties." (pp. 1874-75)

"Through the vicissitudes of life, remember always to love one another. Do not strive with men, even with unbelievers. Show mercy even to those who despitefully abuse you." (p. 1932:2)

"The impulse of friendship transcends all convictions of duty, and the service of a friend for a friend can never be called a sacrifice." (p. 1945:3)

"This experience of losing self and finding the spirit was not one of emotion; it was an act of intelligent self-surrender and unreserved consecration." (p. 2065:4)

"Unmistakably, a new fellowship was arising in the world.

'The multitude who believed continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.' They called each other brother and sister; they greeted one another with a holy kiss; they ministered to the poor. It was a fellowship of living as well as of worship. They were not communal by decree but by the desire to share their goods with their fellow believers. They confidently expected that Jesus would return to complete the establishment of the Father's kingdom during their generation. This spontaneous sharing of earthly possessions was not a direct feature of Jesus' teaching; it came about because these men and women so sincerely and so confidently believed that he was to return any day to finish his work and to consummate the kingdom. But the final results of this well-meant experiment in thoughtless brotherly love were disastrous and sorrow-breeding. Thousands of earnest believers sold their property and disposed of all their capital goods and other productive assets. With the passing of time, the dwindling resources of Christian 'equal-sharing' came to an end—but the world did not. Very soon the believers at Antioch were taking up a collection to keep their fellow believers at Jerusalem from starving." (p. 2067:2)

"Truth often becomes confusing and even misleading when it is dismembered, segregated, isolated, and too much analyzed. Living truth teaches the truth seeker aright only when it is embraced in wholeness and as a living spiritual reality, not as a fact of material science or an inspiration of intervening art." (p. 2075:5)

"The mind of man can attain high levels of spiritual insight and corresponding spheres of divinity of values because it is not wholly material. There is a spirit nucleus in the mind of man—the Adjuster of the divine presence. There are three separate evidences of this spirit indwelling of the human mind:

"1. Humanitarian fellowship—love. The purely animal mind may be gregarious for self-protection, but only the spirit-indwelt intellect is unselfishly altruistic and unconditionally loving.

"2. Interpretation of the universe—wisdom. Only the spirit-indwelt mind can comprehend that the universe is friendly to the individual.

"3. Spiritual evaluation of life—worship. Only the spirit-indwelt man can realize the divine presence and seek to attain a fuller experience in and with this foretaste of divinity." (p. 2094:5)

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Editor's Note: A revised, expanded version of "Spiritual Support Groups" has been completed and is now available by contacting the Fellowship office.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS OF PAPERS

By David N. Elders

In his lesson on the true mastery of the self (p. 1609-1610), Jesus defined a new way of living which anticipated the pouring out of the Spirit of Truth and the consequent, nearly universal bestowal of Thought Adjusters. This new way is the living of life from the inside out rather than from the outside in. Instead of attempting to earn personal salvation by working to improve the outsideness of human behavior ("suppress, obey, and conform to the rules of living"), Jesus both spoke of and modeled the inner and higher way: "you are first *transformed* by the Spirit of Truth and thereby strengthened in your inner soul by the constant spiritual renewing of your mind, and so are you endowed with the power of the certain and joyous performance of the gracious, acceptable, and perfect will of God."

One of the conclusions reached by the participants at the recent Wrightwood Series Seminar on the topic of "Building the Living Temple of Spiritual Fellowship," is that the spiritual fellowship which leads to true community flows from the same fountain which waters true self-mastery, the soul. Though the seminar papers presented dealt with subjects which on the surface seemed quite disparate, in truth, each added dimension to this realization that true spiritual fellowship and community must be lived from the inside, from and in our souls rather than from our egos. Indeed it might be said that while in the old way community is built by the rules, regulations, mores, temporal goals and values of people who seek some form of common association, in the new way community is built by the realization in the soul of each participant that those who are self-conscious of the spirit within are already one in true community. In the old way, a sense of community built from the outside separated those who were in from those who were not; in the new way, community arises wherever and whenever two or more soul-conscious persons associate ("where two or more are gathered in my name..."); thus, no person is excluded from this community except on the basis of his/her own self-realization.

The participants agreed that the Supreme Being is the living temple in which we can choose consciously to live in true spiritual fellowship and community. We experienced together that the soul of each of us is the opening doorway to fellowship in and of the Supreme; that it is in and from the consciousness of our souls that we can truly love God and our fellows; that in raising our sense of identity from the ego-self to the soul-self, we are *transformed* by the Spirit and begin to live our lives in relationship to and with our fellows from the inside, from our souls.

We learned together and experienced that our primary duty as self-conscious citizens in this living temple of spiritual fellowship is to so relate to others—adults and children alike—that they are stimulated to nurture and realize their own souls. We saw that in a family, this soul realization is the motivation, the purpose, and the context for true and healthy parenting. We experienced creative mind-and-soul stimulating ways of using art and music to provide our

children with the unselfish love and demonstration of faith and self-conscious moral decision-making necessary to facilitate their first moral decision, give birth to their souls, and bring the Adjuster's indwelling. We came to realize that family councils and decision-making are the stuff of soul growth in the individual participants, thereby fostering the realization of the union of souls in the larger community of the Supreme.

We better appreciated how outer crisis and conflict operate to bring people together in temporary community groupings to stimulate experiential consideration of God working in time/space, the Supreme; this perception gives enlarged meaning to the notion that "human life experience is the cosmic cocoon in which the universe endowments of the Supreme Being and the universe presence of the Universal Father (none of which are personalities) are evolving the morontia soul of time and the human—divine finaliter character of universe destiny and service." (p. 1289:1) We explored, from the perspective of personal experience, the dimensions of failed community-building, and came to better appreciate the risks associated with the attempt to construct a living spiritual community from the outside; perhaps it can never truly be accomplished that way. Finally, we saw the way in which local groupings of individuals, anytime and anywhere, could become supportive of the experience of Supremacy by focusing the self-conscious moral choosing, faith, and love of the participants on union with God in and through the soul.

We believe that during this weekend seminar of living, learning, and working together we came to see and experience a new way of building a sense of community on our planet, from the inside out, from the consciousness of and in the soul. We realized further the primary responsibility of this new way—to unfailingly create community with others with whom we come into contact; to live our lives such that when we are in personal relationship with an other person(s) we seek to nurture our and their soul-felt realization of the unity of our sonship with our common Father in the union of true fellowship, the Supreme Being—God's community in time and space.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions were originally created to aid us in our Friday night discussion. They are included here as an additional way to explore the questions and issues surrounding the topic. They are not necessarily addressed in the presentation papers.

1. How can we teach children to listen with the ear of their spirit so they grow up in spirit perception?
2. How best to encourage families to return to the family council practices of the Andites (both *Urantia Book* readers and others)?
3. Once family council practices are used within the family, how could families network together to resolve/mediate larger problems in a community family court?
4. Assuming that the emerging spiritual community is a living expression of the actualization of the finite Deity, the Supreme, how are we, individually and collectively, involved in this process?
5. If the actualization of the Supreme is the new wine, what are the new wineskins?
6. A current definition of "community" seems based on a materialistic viewpoint which limits participation to physical proximity (both personal and geographic). Assuming that this revelation teaches a broadened sense of community in which our citizenship offers experience on a universe scale, with both seen and unseen friends, teachers, and companions, how do we re-define our sense of "community" so that the pathways to this revealed and much broadened experience are illuminated both for ourselves and others?
7. What is the relationship between our souls and the living spiritual community?
8. What is the Living Temple of Spiritual Fellowship? How do we build it?
9. How can we be positively aggressive versus reactionary in response to media views of *The Urantia Book* and movement?
10. How do we provide support for the building of spiritual values within our families and community?
11. The church was the focus of early Christianity. What is to be our nuclear unit—the society, a study group family or individual reader?
12. So many of our readers are outside the traditional family unit—should we give the word family a new meaning as we discuss family values?
13. *The Urantia Book* is felt to be a complex compilation of teachings. How can we simplify our mission and message?
14. How can we learn to truly love each other; i.e., to nourish each other's souls?
15. Jesus served to check the ego concerns of the disciples and to keep them spiritually directed. How can we stay centered and focused in serving each other and growing spiritually?
16. As we are all God's children, how do we accept diverse life-styles in our fellowship?
17. In simple terms, what do the world's religions have in common and how can we build on the common beliefs?
18. How can we "as revelation believers" keep from having an exclusivistic fellowship develop?
19. What were the positive aspects of the FOG community which those involved found so strong and dear to them? How did this look to outsiders?
20. What are the pitfalls of such a community of well-meaning people dedicated to "doing the Father's will" and "proclaiming the gospel of Jesus" to the world? How did this look to "outsiders"?

QUESTIONS ON CHILDREN AND THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

1. What does "community" mean to children of different ages and stages?
2. What are the components of community in general which can be used to help build community for children?
3. How can we provide a framework for children to experience a spiritual community without making it seem exclusive?
4. What role do myths, symbols, rituals play in helping children to experience a sense of community? What is being developed by parents and educators within this movement?
5. What do/can children do for each other within a group to make it cohesive?
6. How can students of *The UB* break out of the typical "churchy" pattern of children sitting in basements fiddling with paperwork which some adults have formulated in the abstract, and which may be driving them away because of the lack of adventure, beauty, and relevancy to their lives? What activities can be provided for the kids who do not learn or experience through books, paperwork coloring or listening to adults talk?
7. What responsibilities can children have within a spiritual community? What requirements can be asked of children in order to be part of a spiritual community?

8. What are other Urantia groups doing around the country to promote a sense of community for children?

9. What is the difference and power of group religious experience? At what age does the peer group seem to become more important in helping develop a "beyond-family community," or an extended community cohesiveness?

10. What are the developmental stages of the function of community in the religious development of children?

11. How does children's religious community differ from that of adult religious community?

12. What are the basic truths which children would understand/experience that they could find easily in other religions? How do you help children discover the common truths?

13. Children often learn by modeling. What aspects of the adult religious community can they model?

