

*Messages of Hope: The Phenomenon of Spiritual Renewal  
and  
Dynamics of Transformation*

Presented to the World Congress of Families IV  
Warsaw, Poland  
May 13, 2007

Dr. Carlson and delegates to the World Congress of Families IV, I am both humbled and honored to be asked to address the existing prospects for spiritual renewal and transformation of family life on a global scale. Beneath the seismic and even Vesuvian upheaval of social and political concerns throughout our war-devastated world, there resides a foundation of social and spiritual strength, which for centuries has weathered the buffeting storms that have toppled nations and destroyed civilizations. Though the entity denominated “family” has itself been subject to the assaults of its enemies, it not only has survived when other social orders were collapsing, but it also has continually provided the only bridge from one social construct to the next.

Lionel Casson’s recent monograph entitled *Everyday Life In Ancient Rome* devotes an entire chapter to the family. He observes:

Throughout the whole of Rome’s history, one feature remained constant – the family. The city grew to be an empire, the republic became an autocracy, old-fashioned religion yielded to frenetic new cults from the East, but, through it all, Roman society was based on the family, economic life was built around it, and its many complex problems continued to provide endless matter for debate among Roman lawyers.<sup>1</sup>

For those conditioned to focus on the promiscuity and intrigue of Rome, such an observation is probably surprising. Even in the wild days of the settling of the American western frontier when a significant number of frontier women worked as prostitutes, many secretly dreamed of meeting a man who would whisk them away from the life of sin and give them a life of married respectability. Michael Rutter reports on one infamous woman, Lillie Davis.

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<sup>1</sup> Lionel Casson, *Everyday Life in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press), 1998, p. 10

Lillie was a fellow Texas girl from a small town called Palestine. She decided she wanted to leave the farm to see the big city lights and have some excitement. Making her way to San Antonio, she fulfilled her dreams of living in the big city by entering the world's oldest profession. She took a job at Fanny Porter's house but tired of it quickly and wanted out. Her profession, understandably, bothered her father, and she wanted to make him proud by becoming 'respectable.'

Lillie had the same dream as many bawdy girls; to find a man who would rescue her from her sordid life. Lillie was always on the prowl for a client who might marry her.<sup>2</sup>

Whether in Rome or the American wild-west, somehow the family was honored and sacred, and its security was sought. From the unheralded laborer on the Polish farms to the chambers of Polish nobility, most denizens of the social order seem to sense instinctively that the essential foundation of an operative public consensus is the family.

Participants attending this conference, however, are painfully conscious of the simple truth that almost anything that is left neglected will ultimately decay. This is all the more true if something is under attack. The family is now under attack worldwide. At first the assault on the family was focused primarily in the materialistic western European and North American theaters. Tragically, other societies, which were previously largely immune to such disintegration, now shudder under fusillades directed against the family.

Rabbi Michael Gold provides one of the more perceptive analyses of this conflict in his superb monograph, *God, Love, Sex and Family*.<sup>3</sup> His listing of the culprits attempting to destroy the family includes individualism, the feminist revolution, the sexual revolution, divorce, reproductive choices, infertility, and abuse. Others could be added, such as Dartmouth University's study entitled *Hardwired To Connect*. This critically important study sponsored by the YMCA of the USA, the Institute for American Values, and the Dartmouth Medical School concludes that the extensive use of psychotherapies and medications has failed to reverse the rapidly deteriorating health of children in the USA. Rates of depression, anxiety, conduct disorders, thoughts of suicide and worse are escalating rather than declining. The report suggests that children are

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Rutter, *Wild Bunch Women* (Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press), 1976, p.8

<sup>3</sup> Michael Gold, *God, Love, Sex, and Family* (Deatsville, AL: Alabama Book Composition), 1998

suffering from a lack of “connectedness.” They need, but often do not have, connectedness to other people or to moral and spiritual meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The advance of feminism and the marginalization of men are beginning to manifest in unexpected places. Several articles have appeared recently focusing on the American University. The prestigious *Chronicle of Higher Education* in its January 26, 2007, edition ran a story on “The New Gender Divide.” Nearly sixty percent of college and university students in America are now female.

One can rejoice in this availability of education for members of the fairer sex without missing the obvious: In a few years men will increasingly be underrepresented among the intelligentsia and will gradually cede leadership in many areas to women. And most of these women ascending to these new roles will maintain major focus on a career and not on the family and the children. As one woman remarked,

Bearing a new liberated identity, many women have devoted themselves to ambitious busyness everywhere but in the home. They are enmeshed in overwhelming voluntarism to achieve accolades and recognition in the community, or they are surrogate wives and mothers dedicated to hatching professional pursuits that promise power and pocketbook. Instead of encouraging adolescents to cut the apron strings of mother and venture out into society, we are begging mothers not to cut the apron strings on their babies and catapult them prematurely into a menacing world! Mom and hot apple pie have been replaced by institutional day care centers and cold apple turnovers at McDonald's!

Women have been liberated right out of the genuine freedom they enjoyed for centuries to oversee the home, rear the children, and pursue personal creativity; they have been brainwashed to believe that the absence of a titled, payroll occupation enslaves a woman to failure, boredom, and imprisonment within the confines of home. Though feminism speaks of liberation, self-fulfillment, personal rights, and breaking down barriers, these phrases inevitably mean the opposite. In fact, the opposite is true because a salaried job and titled position can inhibit a woman's natural nesting instinct and maternity by inverting her priorities so that failures almost inevitably come in the rearing of her own children and the building of an earthly shelter for those whom she loves most. The mundane accompanies every task, however high paying or prestigious the job, so that escape from boredom is not inevitable just because your workplace is not at home. And where is the time for personal creativity when you are in essence working two jobs – one at home and one away?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dartmouth Medical School, *Hardwired to Connect* (New York, NY: , Institute for American Values), 1996

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Patterson, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books), 1991, p.365

Children out of control, execution of innocents in the womb by their mothers, divorce eviscerating family life on every hand, wars, conflicts, violence and terrorism all churned by hatred and a spirit of revenge. Is there hope for our world? Are we condemned simply to clench our teeth and grind out an existence in an increasingly hostile world? If the United Nations and all sovereign governments have corporately failed to stem the tide of violence in our world, what should we do? If science, medicine, and psychotherapy for all the good they may accomplish have proven illusory as the panacea they promised to be, are we then left to be tossed endlessly on a stormy sea with no hope of safe haven? As promising social and education programs have cratered, along with promised noble deeds, as more sophisticated and determined evils proliferated, have we no place to turn?

The family remains both the first and the most important social unit created by an all wise omniscient God. As the Hebrew Scriptures record “God created the heavens and the earth.” In a profound sense, that is the most important verse in the Jewish Bible. If it is not true that God created all that exists, then make no mistake about what this means. Harvard behaviorist, B.F. Skinner, was correct when he proclaimed that a human being had no real freedom and no dignity.<sup>6</sup> And Sigmund Freud was accurate when he insisted that “morality” was no more than “human convention,” a temporary and local agreement in some subset of the social order void of ontologically significant foundation.<sup>7</sup>

The creation narrative of Genesis wastes no time in arriving at the importance of the family and the remainder of the Scriptures return to the theme at significant intervals. While the ultimate purpose of the sacred books of most religions is to define how humans are to relate to God, a significant part of that relationship to God has to do with a relationship to the rest of His creation, specifically those who are made in the *Imago Dei*. In turn, relationships with other humans begins and must be taught and modeled in the family, God’s first institution.

Why is the family so essential to hope in the transformation of the social and political establishment? What is it that the family can contribute to transform the social order that seems so illusive for governments, schools, and even ecclesiastical

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<sup>6</sup> B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom & Dignity* (New York, NY: Bantam), 1971, p. 191

<sup>7</sup> R. J. Rushdoony, *Freud* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books), 1965

organizations? While I believe that the list to follow is anything but exhaustive, I nevertheless offer five contributions to the transformation of our world that are best launched from the platform of the family.

**First, the family is ordained of God as the only context for the exercise of the most intimate physical expression of human affection.** The Scriptures declare that “Adam knew his wife and she conceived.” God’s original plan is for one man to know one woman in a unique way that neither knows any other human.

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother,  
and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh  
(Gen 2:24).*

In this relationship so trivialized in the world by selfish, carnal sex, the knowledge of the one-man-and-one-woman-union models the potentially unique relationship that an individual has with God. Each individual’s experience with God bears similarities with that of others but also has features totally unique to himself. Furthermore, the love, affection, and loyalty that should develop from this unique intimacy are the precise attributes needed to begin the transformation of society.

The global preoccupation with sex actually betrays not only the evil resident within the human heart and its need of redemption but also a certain desperation for something that brings satisfaction, adventure, fulfillment. Gender confusions, the abuse and enslavement of women and boys for the sex industry, the multibillion dollar pornography trade, increasing unfaithfulness to marital covenants with God and spouses, and ever more bizarre sexual experimentation all prove to be the ultimate mirage on the desert landscape of the postmodern psyche. Promising great satisfaction and a new buzz, they deliver instead guilt, sorrow, heartache, disappointment, ever more virulent diseases, frustration, crime, and separation from God. On the other hand, intimacy between husband and wife, union without guilt, sex without sickness, fulfillment without frustration, and adventure without adversity – these commitments bring far more rewarding results. Furthermore, the procreative fruit brings the greatest joys in life and the opportunity for the parents to model love, loyalty, faithfulness, and sacrifice for the offspring, teaching them transforming truths in the family.

**Second, the family is the appropriate venue for the conception with and nurture of new life.** Biological realities make it possible to spawn new life outside the family, but this was never God's plan; and as the *Hardwired To Connect* document demonstrates, the family is the right context for this process. Every little child needs a mother and a father, not merely to conceive life but also to protect, nurture, teach, and love him. Within the family the child needs to learn loyalty, appreciation, respect for elders and others. Relating to and caring for siblings prepares the child for relationships in the broader world. Learning appreciation of and respect for the extended family, for grandparents, uncles, aunts, etcetera, not only creates a sense of "belonging" to something significant but also prepares the child for understanding the changes of life and to relate to people of different age and circumstance.

**Third, no arena could be more important for instruction in the basics of forgiveness.** Unavoidable are the hurts, sorrows, disappointments, and injustices of life. But how we respond to these has much to do with how we get along in life and with whether or not there is a chance of transforming our world. The author of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament warns:

*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled (Heb 12:15).*

This "root of bitterness" causes most of the trouble in our violent world and defiles otherwise noble citizens. Because I believe that intense, determined evil must sometimes be met with force, I am not a pacifist, though I admire those who are. But in the home in which I was reared, I was taught the importance of "loving one's enemy," of "returning good for evil," and of "praying for those who persecuted us." My school could teach me physics and mathematics, my government could teach me public policy, but only my Mother and Dad could have taught me and modeled for me the virtue of forgiveness.

As though it were yesterday, I still remember an incident in my front yard when I was nine years old. Another boy, doubtless destined to athletic fame, hurled a hard baseball at me when I was not looking and connected solidly with my head. I was furious. Forgetting temporarily where I was, I shouted at the boy, "You donkey," only

for that braying beast of burden I used another less endearing term, which I had learned from the other kids at school but a nomenclature strictly circumscribed at my house.

That day, I got memorable lessons about both justice and forgiveness. My mother suddenly appeared at the doorway of our home. Her eyes flashed like a flame of fire, and I knew that justice was about to be done. I cried out for forgiveness. My Dad said, “Son do you forgive, Bill?” “No,” I protested. “He doesn’t deserve forgiveness. I’ll hit him in the head with a ball,” I threatened. Then my Dad gently reminded me that no one “deserves” forgiveness. I will never forget the impact of his words as he said, “Son, you will never have to forgive any human as much as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” Coming from my father, whom I watched model that concept daily, the impression was indelibly inscribed upon my heart.

**Fourth, the family is the most critical venue for instruction about God and our required responses to Him.** This observation is intended in no way to denigrate the work of mosque, temple, or church. I am a churchman. But the ecclesiastical venue interacts with the child, if at all, only a fraction of the time; the teaching of these disciplines is the prerogative of the parent. The parents are God’s chosen prophets to inculcate the knowledge of God’s person, purposes, and ways in the life of the child. Failure to do so, in most cases, shortchanges the child for life, and maybe for eternity.

Because I could observe how closely my Father and Mother walked with God, because they knew God, sought His love and submitted to His ways and purposes, I grew up understanding what other adults in any setting could never have successfully communicated to me. The Wittenberg Reformer Martin Luther and his wife Katie had several children. Their daughter Magdalena became desperately ill. Luther said to her, “Magdalenchen, my little girl, you would like to stay with your father here and you would be glad to go to your Father in heaven?” Luther held her in his arms until she died while Katie and the family watched. Broken-hearted, Luther said, “*Du liebes Lenichen*, you will rise and shine like the stars and the sun. How strange it is to know that she is at peace and all is well, and yet to be so sorrowful!”<sup>8</sup>

In that hour, Luther learned more about the Fatherhood of God than in all his theological studies combined. He also taught his children more about God, more about

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<sup>8</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, ((New York: Meridian 1995), p. 304

salvation, more about eternity, more about life and more about the family than he ever taught them by sermon or by learned tome. The home teaches lessons about God more effectively than any other unit of society.

**Finally, the family is the best school available for teaching values and morality.** Maurice Hindus was born in a Russian village in 1891 but immigrated to America in 1905. He returned often to Russia and wrote documentaries about Russia for the west. After journeys in 1958 and 1960, Doubleday published his *House Without A Roof* in 1961. This documentary of Russia caught my eye because it had a chapter from this Jewish writer entitled “Triumph of the Baptists.” Since I am a Baptist and like to hear nice things said about my forefathers in faith, I naturally gravitated to the monograph. Hindus was kind to the Baptists but most important is what he said about their homes.

Shortly afterward, while traveling through the province of Saratov, I came to a village where the chairman of the local soviet put me up for the night with a Baptist family, because, as he said, ‘they have a very clean house.’ Indeed, it was one of the cleanest peasant homes I had ever seen: the board floor untracked by mud, the walls neatly whitewashed, white curtains at the windows, and-miracle of miracles-hardly a fly in the house and no bugs in my bed.

I lived with this family for several days and observed that the man was extraordinarily polite to his wife, that he was kind to animals, even to pigs, and that he was a more advanced farmer than were other *muzhiks* in the village.

In my further travels in villages, I always inquired whether there was a Baptist family there, and if there was, I stayed with them, knowing that I would live in a clean house, in a tranquil family atmosphere, where the man would defer to his wife with a sense of chivalry that was as new as it was refreshing in Russian peasant society.

My greatest surprise was the discovery of a family of Baptists in my native village, a man and his wife who had been my boyhood playmates, and of course I stayed with them. At the time, I wrote of them: Piously they fulfilled the tenants of their faith as propagated in Russia. They never smoked and never allowed anybody to draw a breath of tobacco in their house. No liquor ever passed their lips or their threshold. They never sat down to a meal without saying grace, and their speech was free from the obscenities that spice peasant talk. Their house was the cleanest in the village – the floor always scrubbed, the walls whitewashed, the windows wiped. No chickens strutted in their living room and no pigs ever tumbled in for a feeding, as in other peasant homes. It was the only house in the village where one could sit down to a meal without be obliged to

engage in perpetual battle with flies. ‘When flies gather inside,’ explained my hostess, ‘we carry out our food, darken the room, open the doors, and flies fly out!’ An effective method of riddance but requiring constant repetition. Nobody else in the village was doing it, and my hostess wouldn’t have done so had she not been converted to the new faith.<sup>9</sup>

Hindus, to my knowledge, became neither a Christian nor a Baptist. But he knew the value of a family and articulated that wonderfully. He realized that neither school nor government has much hope of imparting basic civility to the next generation to say nothing of the great virtues of truth, honesty, gratitude, courage, responsibility, and sacrifice. If governments and schools cannot effectively propagate these and religious organizations can only add accentuation, where can they be birthed? Hindus knew that all these virtues are born where the people who exhibit them are born – in the family.

Well, I must close. You did not know her. Neither did I. I do know her son, Willi Daiker, who lives in Bonn, Germany. Auguste Daiker was left a widow with five children in a Kazakh village in the days of the Soviet Union. This German family found itself in an alien culture with hardly enough to keep body and soul together. Pressure from Marxist leaders in school to abandon “pre-scientific beliefs about the existence of God” and embrace atheism were clever and constant.

Auguste worked all night to provide for her children and by day kept her house and taught her children to trust God. Willi said, “We never really knew when she slept.” She taught them that God was good, just, loving, forgiving, gracious, and worthy of our love, devotion and worship. Auguste suffered greatly in those days even being imprisoned for nearly two years for her faith. Now she is with the Lord. She did not live long enough to see how God used her faith and witness. Today, Willi Daiker is one of the most prominent ministers in Germany. Ask Willi and he will tell you of many who have had an impact on his life. But when he talks of his mother Auguste, tears well up in his eyes; and he will tell you plainly that she, known by few, honored by fewer still, was used of God to transform the life and faith of Willi and through him thousands of others.

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<sup>9</sup>Maurice Hindus, *House Without A Roof* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), 1961, p. 125-126

Ladies and Gentlemen, delegates of this symposium on the family, there is simply no substitute for the family. May we guard it, defend it, nurture it, and sustain it in a difficult day.