

A child's world is what he perceives it to be, and what he perceives is what we grown-ups have made of it. Into that pin-point part of the world that we call his home, the child is born, and from what he perceives in that small world, he begins to create those qualities of being by which he will be known.

If his home is a hungry home, not only will his tender body be unfed but his perceptions will be narrowed to his own pain and his mind will be unfed as well.

If his home is an angry home, the child will run away from the anger and in fear close his mind to the grown-up world — to open it again only in the adulthood of adolescence when, with the power of his new-found manhood, he may wreak vengeance upon a society that gave him only fear to grow on.

If his home is a lonely home, where the grown-ups are too busy working and playing to attend to him, the child, in resentment, will create jerry-built Castles in Spain, from which, because he will be Lord of the Castle, he can command the attention, respect and love that he needs. Then when he grows up, the castles may fall about his ears in the arrogance, selfishness, and disrespect for people which he was forced to build into his life.

In the home that is a loving home, the child, in complete security, opens all the doors of his mind to a smiling world. Cultural deprivation, a phrase on so many educational tongues these days, is really the deprivation of love and may be found as readily in affluence as in poverty. A loving home, whether it be the palace or the hut, is the child's fortune, the one fortune that he can always take with him and which he can never lose.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land," says the fifth commandment. Christ turned the commandment the other way around: honor the child, he told the crowd when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Honor, respect and love them. This we must do if we have the least concern for their happiness, for their children's happiness. This we must do if we are ever to hope that they, our children, or their children's children, may succeed where we have failed to create even a small corner of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The teacher in the classroom is the stand-in for the parent. Before the child goes to school, he has taken all that he can use from the small world

of his home which his parents have provided for him, and out of it he has made himself. The results are almost incredible. Never again will he be able to accomplish so much in so little time. Now he goes into another small world, the classroom, and will continue his growth by feeding his mind on the things that he finds there. Society, of course, provides the shelter, the equipment, even provides all the other children; but it is the teacher who, in the place of the parent, provides the enticement to think by which the child may continue to strive for those ideas that lie just a little beyond. This is what mental growth is, of course — reaching for the beyond, arriving where it was only to discover that the beyond is still just beyond; then reaching again.

The one wide-open door to the child's beyond is freedom of mind, and in school as in the home (as in life, for that matter) the only way to real freedom of mind is love. We don't usually think of love and education going along together. More likely, from our own experience as from our children's experience, we think of words the opposite of love, words like compulsion and force, for instance. Since the child is such a little one, it has always been so easy to compel him.

St. Augustine, the father of Christian theology, writes of his boyhood, about sixteen hundred years ago:

In boyhood itself, I loved not to study and hated to be forced to it. Yet I was forced. But I did not well, for no one doth well against his will, even though what he doth be well. Yet neither did they well who forced me. For they were regardless how I should employ what they forced me to learn, except to satiate the insatiate desires of a wealthy beggary and a shameful glory.

One hundred and fifty years ago children in Great Britain were seated on benches, from two hundred to a thousand in a classroom. The master taught the lessons to groups of older children, and when they could parrot the lessons back to him, the older children parroted the lessons to the younger ones. When the young ones could say the lessons also, they were becoming educated. St. Augustine wrote of this kind of teaching, "One and one, two; two and two, four; this was to me a hateful sing-song."

Only one hundred years ago, May 27, 1867, a country storekeeper in North America, Zadoc Long, wrote in his journal about his grandson:

Is it not cruel to deny children, to shut them up as we cage birds in close school rooms and nurseries, to cramp their muscles by long sitting still in one position and confuse their brains with hard lessons for which they have no inclination? I have for long believed that children are confined too much in school, that they grow up stronger in mind and body to have more indulgences of their natural inclinations, properly guarded and corrected.

And today — well, what of today? Have we changed very much since the time of Zadoc Long? I was talking with a thirteen-year-old girl not long ago, a highly, very highly intelligent little girl, who complained eloquently about school. So, quite innocently, I asked her, "Is there nothing, absolutely nothing, about school that you like?" "Yes," she replied, "Recess."

How would we as adults respond to the following command: "Ladies and gentlemen, you have had it. You are to sit where you are five hours a day, two hundred days a year, for the next twelve, thirteen, seventeen years. You must not move, you must not talk to one another. And as you sit, you will listen to me, and when I get tired, you will listen to somebody else and then back to me. After you have listened, you will repeat back to me what I said. For ten years I shall have guards around you to see that you don't escape. After ten years, if you can't stand your callouses any more, you may go."

This is what we have said and this is what we have done to our children. Zadoc Long called such education cruel. Agnes Snyder, a great-hearted teacher of today, calls it brutal.

It seems incredible that St. Augustine as a boy, sixteen hundred years ago, and my young friend Heather, in school today, should hate school for exactly the same reason, the enforcement of learning, that brutality of enforcement. In those sixteen hundred years man, by his technology, has changed his world. Except that the River Po still runs its quiet course, and the wind still makes thunder music in the Apennines, Augustine, if he could wake today, would think that he had been resurrected on another planet. Except that if he were to go into a school room he would say, "But no. This is Earth. This is the world I knew. Education, like the river, runs its unchanging course."

In deprecating education as I am doing, I am not, for a moment, condemning teachers. It is true that we have pictures in our minds of teachers of the past, striding the classroom with their whacking canes, enforcing education as the prison guards used the bull-whip to reinforce society's displeasure at a convict's crime. From my own schooling, beginning over sixty years ago, my memories of those teachers whose faces I can still see (and the faces of my first two teachers are very much alive because I go to visit them once a year) — my memories of the twelve or more people who led my childhood and adolescence through the maze of education are still the breath of gentleness, of kindness, of personal concern that make me glow with gratitude. Without fear of refutation or contradiction, I can report that in no other profession that works with people will one find the qualities of humaneness, kindness and understanding that one finds among teachers today.

Teacher and child alike have been the victims of a way of thinking about education — a way of thinking as old as the hills, or at least as old as primitive man. This way of thinking says three things. First, we grown-ups know best: therefore if the child does not toe the line, he is wrong. Second, not only do we know best, but we know everything: if we make the child know what we know, he will know everything, too. Third, since children don't know anything, we must force them to do what we do, think as we think, know what we know.

In other words, every generation of man has done its unholy best to force the teacher to force the child to grow into the image that that generation has had of itself. This is what Augustine called, "a shameful glory." And what do we see in ourselves to glorify? From Japan to Indonesia to Scandinavia to North America, the children of the world are in rebellion at the hate that slew eighty million children and the fathers and mothers of children, at our continual denial of the rights of man, at our current lust for affluence, power and status, at the shameful glory that we find in those of our children whom we have forced to grow into the self-satisfied image that we have of ourselves.

So much for the dark side, a few time-exposures in the long night of education. In every generation, of course, a few young people refused to be shackled to the past and fled into the dawn. To them we owe what we call our civilization.

Is it possible that we can now lead all children, not just those few, but all children into that great dawn that we have called freedom of mind? I think we can. I know we must.

A hundred years ago Matthew Arnold wrote:

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage
And gay without frivolity.

I believe that we are now living in that age's dawn. There is a word that lights the dawn. The word is *care*. About the time that Matthew Arnold wrote his verse, Florence Nightingale, the Lady of the Lamp, lit the lamp of care. Now, over a hundred years later, the world has begun to care — has begun to care about the hungry people of the world, the illiterate, the down-trodden, the handicapped, even the rejected ones. Especially have we begun to care about our own children, not for our sake but for our children's sake, and for the sake of our children's children.

What does *care* mean for the school? What happens as a result of it?

First, it means excitement and eagerness for the child. Watch a three-year-old in the supermarket — looking, touching, handling, tasting. The only way that young mothers can keep him from pulling the stack of corn-flakes down over his head is to put him in the buggy with the groceries. The eagerness to find out, and the excitement of finding out are the power of the two-year-old unlocking the medicine cabinet, as they are the power of the six-year-old unlocking the mysteries of mathematics, as they are the power of a Canadian Junior Red Cross worker figuring out with the Sudanese how to grow garden vegetables in the desert. They are the power that sets man to work at the conquest of time and space. They are also the only power that will ensure the child's growth.

The second thing that happens is that the child learns so fast that the teacher is hard put to keep up with him. We have always sold the child's

intelligence short. The reason is that teaching has been so much telling, and learning has been so much listening. When the teacher does so much talking, he does one of two things: he either stops the child thinking, or he starts him thinking about something far away. This other way the child can do nothing but think, figuring things out all the time. The consequence is that the child often finds meanings in the world of his mind that are startling in their insight and clarity. And he can use his new-found knowledge to propel his mind forward at a rate that would alarm his grandparents.

The third thing that happens is that the child starts building purposes and values into his life at a time when we would think that he should still be chasing rainbows. The lack of purposes and values at the end of school is a major complaint of both children and their parents, a major complaint of society too, as we appraise the wasting lives of growing numbers of boys and girls headed for catastrophe. True education has a built-in, purpose-making gadget called inquiry. Inquiry is what makes thinking go, inquiry is reaching for the beyond. The beauty of inquiry is that once it gets under way it has become a purpose, and once it becomes a purpose only a stronger purpose, created by a stronger yearning, can distract it. Values lie in the glow that comes from the pursuit of fulfilling purposes.

Then there is one more thing. To the teacher come the children from the hungry homes, the angry homes, the lonely homes, the loving homes, each a child as nature makes children, each participating in the eagerness to grow, but each child bringing with him his own perceptions of the world. Now that the teacher is not required by law and the enforcement of the law to make sure that all children learn exactly the same knowledge in exactly the same time, in exactly the same way, he can work with his children, not as if they were tape recorders for storage and retrieval of the knowledge that the teacher transmits to him, but as people, each a person as different from every other child as the teacher himself is different from any of them, helping each child set off from the doorway of his own mind into the explorations and adventures of a brand new world.

What adventures they will have! Their problems will make Columbus's search for India and Sir Walter Raleigh's adventures with the Spanish galleons seem like childish fun and games. Three billion people in the world today; six billion at the turn of the century. How to feed them when we cannot feed the people that we have now, when the arable land of the world will be only one-half acre per person. How will our children handle a world when the war for men's hearts and minds, the war of ideologies, becomes a war for food? What will they do about rich and poor when the world becomes top-heavy with both? How will they cope with a world of leisure when, in automation, even the buttons push themselves? What will they do about the ethics and morality of man in a world in which even to work is to deprive another of his job? How will they manage to maintain their individuality, manage to stay people, in a world of mass communication, of mass production, of mass emotions? And how will they create a techno-

logy to solve their problems when all of the metallic ores and the fuels to propel them have rusted into dust and exploded into sky? Above all, how will they teach their children to solve the heritage of problems such as these that we have written into our wills as the legacy we leave our youth?

Can we leave another legacy?

The earth and sky, the flowers,
The listless fragrance of the wonderment in stars,
These are not ours to leave
But held in trust by the sun and day.

The gift of life we cannot leave
For who gives life but them, they two,
Harbingers of life, their child.

We cannot leave them peace
Because peace died when the angels died.
Man killed his angels; and their wings
Are dust trickling through our fingers.

Can we write hope into our wills?

To our children: we bequeath thee
Flanders fields, one artificial poppy
Six million Stars of David torn from the hearts of Jews,
The starving sands of India,
The negro ghettos of North America,
And Mao Tse Tung.

But wait. There is a hope. The child is hope.
What hope have we but in our children?
To our children, then, we bequeath themselves.
An odd bequest, but all we have to give.
"And how can we be sure?" the children ask.
"For many thousand years you've tried to make us not ourselves but you."
And we reply, "There abideth three,
Faith, hope and love.
You are our hope,
Faith is our trust in you,
Love is our care for you.
In our faith and love reclaim yourselves
And in yourselves, reclaim our world."