



CHAPTER ONE

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle . . .

Going home from a day's outing, Rolf and Heidi Neumann were motoring along Robert Louis Stevenson's Silverado Trail in the upper reaches of California's lush and historic Napa Valley. Each curve of the highway brought new surprises as the pine and oak-covered mountains blended with the vineyard-strewn vale. The young couple marveled at nature's expressions, occasionally pointing to a doe in an open patch of forest or reminiscing about their honeymoon as they caught sight of a quaint cottage all but hidden in the trees. For some moments they seemed unaware of three-year-old Melanie and five-year-old Michael, playing contentedly in the rear of the station wagon. But Michael neatly took care of that. "Mommie," he interrupted, "Mommie, are we God's dream?"

"Why, yes, Mikey," Heidi responded, momentarily startled at her little boy's insights. "Why do you ask?"

"I was just wondering."

At least one pair of young ears had caught the spirit of this front seat conversation. Although nothing had been said about dreams or even about God, Mikey had drawn his own conclusions. He had identified with God and with dreams simply because his front-seat models used that kind of language.

Dorothy and I are distressed that there are any parents or educators or other very bright minds to whom such talk is foreign, especially in America, where we pledge allegiance to "one nation under God," and use currency that proclaims, "In God we Trust."

It distresses us also that conversation about God's reality in our lives should draw angry reactions from psychologists and scientists who insist on openness in their search for truth. No one has yet come up with a rational road around the idea of an all-wise, all-powerful God when dealing with the wonders of little children, although many have made fools of themselves trying. An overwhelming question inevitably emerges in the thoughtful parent's mind, "What really is the worth of my child?"

Five-year-old Michael without pretense reflected powerfully the values he had been taught. The parent models had clearly spoken. The Neumanns, as their names might suggest, were only two generations away from conservative European forebears whose roots gave America her divine commitment. Little wonder that Heidi and Rolf Neumann are convinced that Michael and Melanie were given them as heaven's trust.

Science and God

Their belief might still sound odd to those who are not acquainted with the Bible. Or it might appear strange to those who are not informed about the mysterious process that brings a child into the world and sees him grow. There is, for example, the growth of his brain—an amazing little watery mass of pink-grey mush, which can handle problems more complex than a computer that would cover the face of the earth. Nor could such a computer either reason or worship. Then there is the development of the eyes, each of which has more than 135,000,000 tiny receptors called "rods and cones"—which along with the other senses can bring information to the brain at a rate of 100,000,000 bits of data per second!

Any scientists who say this marvel "just happened" should, in the opinion of noted astronomer Sir James Jeans, have their own heads examined. He considered evolution's story of the "accidental" development of the universe and its human beings about as likely as the formation of an unabridged dictionary from a print shop explosion. University of California astronomers long ago

pointed out that there are more worlds in the universe—not counting their suns—than there are grains of sand on the seashores of this earth. But eminent Cleveland astronomer J. J. Nassam marveled not so much at the bigness of the universe as at the mind God gave man.

It is the building of such minds in our little children that is perhaps our greatest trust from God. But why such infinite resources for such an earthy life? The Scriptures are clear that it was the original intent of God that our minds were created for eternity and that He did not plan on death for us. These writings are filled with overtones which even now suggest future lives that measure with the life of God (John 3:16, 14:1-3, etc., KJV). Paul clearly identifies us as joint heirs with the Son of God, the King of kings—if we choose Him as our King (Rom. 8:14-17, KJV). Peter repeatedly refers to our royal station (1 Pet. 2:9, KJV). And the Apostle John flatly proclaims us "kings and priests unto God" and tells precisely how and where this inheritance and coronation take place (Rev. 1:5-6; 3:20-21; 5:9-10, KJV).

So the work of parents is to share with God the making of kings! Such is the mandate from the Creator Himself, the King of all kings.

How Kings Are Made

One day during our years in Japan we hosted Senior Prince Takamatsu and his lovely princess, heiress of the legendary Tokugawa shogunate. He is a brother of Emperor Hirohito and uncle of Crown Prince Akihito. While we dined together in our home that day, the prince held our children Dennis and Kathie close by him on the sofa and told them how kings are made—how Akihito-san was being prepared for Japan's throne.

The peers of the court, he said, saw their job as a sacred responsibility. They were of course determined that the young prince would be well schooled in his studies. Yet their far greater concern was his character. His attitudes, motives, habits, manners, courtesies, way of peaking, and self-control were ever on

their minds. The way he walked, the manner in which he met others, his willingness to work and to serve ranked high in their priorities. He must be educated at once in courage and patience, firmness and compassion, determination and understanding. As prince and emperor he would be an example to the Land of the Rising Sun.

He was allowed until eight or nine to remain in the warmth of his palace home, close to his father and mother, and help in the rearing of his little brother and sisters. Then he was taken a block away, each day, across the Tokyo palace moat to the Imperial Library. There, largely alone for a few years, he was taught precisely how to walk, talk, listen, react, and to have near perfect self-control under any and all circumstances.

A careful daily report of his progress was provided the emperor and empress, who warmly welcomed the princeling home at the end of each day. There was never a question about the values he was to learn. His parents and his tutors knew well that the sweetest and most poignant sociability comes not from random association with classmates, but from building a sense of self-worth and a concern for others. We later witnessed the poise of the crown prince at public and private events. He was a source of pride to the peerage and obviously of high satisfaction to his family.

Bigger is not better. If the training of a crown prince should be a sobering task for Japan's courtiers, how much more for us of common stock, who are charged with preparing kings for the throne room of God? As joint heirs with the King of kings, the heritage of our children ranks above that of an earthly monarch as the heavens are higher than the earth.

The tutorial system has never been excelled in education. And the home has been its coziest nest. Many of the great geniuses of the ages were largely schooled at home. In fact, no one has ever improved on the reasonably well-managed home school. Its only serious challenge-at-large has been the one-room rural family-type school which has been indeed a worthy complement to the home. But, for a general education, large schools have seldom proved as effective as smaller ones. Even James Bryant Conant, who fathered

the "comprehensive" school for "enrichment," confessed his error before he died. Many of his enrichment centers had become educational ghettos. Charles Evers, black mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, who once led the fight for more busing, moans the woes that bigness has brought. He says that busing—which consolidation has required—"is ridiculous." The kids "are so sleepy they can't be taught." Evers pleads for more small schools.⁴⁷

"It's a matter of understanding what education really is," states Fran Nolan, child specialist with the State of New York. "Education isn't books and charts and tests nearly so much as it is meaningful living, and no one can provide this better than good parents." Indeed a warm, responsive, and reasonably consistent parent with little formal education can, in an hour and a half or two hours a day, easily outdistance the teacher who has twenty or thirty or more kiddies in her coop. Isn't it about time we who are teachers stop trying to convince parents that we can outparent them, and for us to sense that a teaching certificate is no guarantee of teaching skill? Rather, shouldn't we be working to turn parental feelings of inferiority into feelings of self-worth as the world's best teachers of their own children? They are particularly effective through their youngsters' value-building pre-adolescent years. They are a key to the restoration of our schools.

Some Very Heavy Costs

If our educational answers said that the more we spend on schools the better our children are educated, the home might be partly justified in its retreat. But this is not the way it is. In his now-famed report, sociologist James Coleman found that a child's success or failure in school is largely determined by the family rather than the school budget.^{30, 32} Tax increases are not bringing the improvements in education that we are promised.⁴¹ In fact, the proposals and results are far from the estimates even well-informed legislators have posed.⁵⁴ And on an intimate family basis, Cornell's Urie Bronfenbrenner found that children who spend more of their elective time with their agetates than with their parents or other

family adults, have distorted views of parents, peers, and themselves.¹²

The tendency of most schools and similar institutions is to make the child's program rigid. This is a necessary feature of mass production. The youngster's activity for much of the day is focused in a few square feet of area around his desk, and timed out to the minute. As the years have rolled on, we have tightened the noose and piled on the studies, expecting the child nobly to respond with higher achievement. But it hasn't worked out that way. School records have dismally declined, with learning failure, delinquency, and hyperactivity racing for first place in HEW statistics. Is this what we want for our children?

A number of writers have pointed out the dangers of earlier and earlier institutional life for the little ones, and of the fading of old-fashioned home chores and family experience in favor of "me-first" sports and amusements.⁴³ But many professionals, more intent on teacher jobs and equipment sales than on the needs of children, have failed to understand that their own long-term future depends on the welfare of those in their care. If the school system fails, there may no longer be any teacher jobs as we know them now.

On the other hand, if the home is given its full share of the youngsters' time—until their learning tools are tempered and their values stabilized—the evidence is clear that it will produce far better "raw material" for the school's manufacture.⁴³ The home is the best possible foundation for the school. But we have weakened that base with early school entrance requirements and with curricula that cater more to indulgence than to principled character development. If during the present era of educational reassessment the state school systems do not relax their rigid control over the child's education, there is a stark prospect of wholesale rebellion. Stanford education dean J. Myron Atkin sees the possible "dismantling of universal, public, compulsory education as it has been pioneered in America."⁴

Into this smoggy educational climate the home school is bringing a breath of fresh air for many families. Parents have shown themselves to be remarkably capable tutors. Home-schooled

kids

have time to make things in the kitchen or garage or to go places with their parents without fear of school disruption. Their tender spirits do not have to confront the often defiling rivalry and ridicule of the classroom, playground, or bus. They make outstanding records in community leadership and service. And their parents particularly relish the privilege of teaching cherished principles and moral beliefs without pressure and without the intrusion of textbook ideas they regard as alien or amoral.

Home—The Best Early School

Many leading psychologists freely underscore the warm quality of the home. David Elkind of the University of Rochester,¹⁸ Meredith Robinson of the Stanford Research Institute⁵² and William Rohwer of California-Berkeley⁵³ join in suggesting that the family is the best learning nest until near adolescence—if, of course, you can provide a good home. We see that as our first and greatest educational goal—to provide good homes; homes where the children are not "burned out" by classroom pressures, as Elkind suggests; homes where warm, responsive, consistent care guarantees the most efficient education. Homes where lamblike freedom under the firm but tender nurture of the shepherd brings out learning which no school can match.

If these home schools were not doing a good job of education, the state might have reason for concern.

When several years ago the State of New York demanded that Douglas Ort put his children in school, he requested an explanation of the complaint against him. "What is really the problem?" he asked, after some discussion.

"The likely charge is 'child neglect,'" warned the well-mannered state's officer. "Usually 'criminal child neglect.'"

"It is obvious, even from your own comments," Ort reasoned, "that our children are not neglected."

"But it's the law," was the defensive retort.

"Are you," asked Ort, "more concerned about the letter of the law, a possibly bad law? Or about the real needs of our children?"

"I didn't make the laws," the man apologized, "but I must follow instructions."

"Are you worried about their achievement?" Ort inquired. "Clearly you are not concerned about their behavior."

"Well, yes, we must make sure they are up to state standards." "What standards do you have in mind?"

"Any good standardized test, such as—"

"What is the toughest of all?"

"The Stanford Achievement battery is a good one."

"Then please test them," Ort politely challenged.

At the same time thirteen children from six home school families were tested. All achieved above the 90th percentile, or in the upper 10 percent of the nation. One of Doug Ort's children scored in the 96th percentile and the other tied with a neighbor's child in the 99th percentile. Recently, thoughtful New York school men have been patient with such home schools.

Meanwhile, in Nebraska, Lesley Sue Rice gained an average of nearly three years in one year under her high-school-educated mother. And eight-year-old Corinne Johnson of Ridgewood, New Jersey, was excelling in fifth-grade work at home.

While there are bound to be negligent parents who will encourage truancy or keep their children at home for other reasons, they should not form the basis for judgment of mothers and fathers who are truly anxious to give their children the best rearing possible, even if they have to do the teaching themselves. At The Moore Foundation, we average from dozens home school inquiries a day in our office and are frequently called for help in dealing with the law—sometimes to witness in court. Yet of all the hundreds of cases in our files, we do not know of one such home school in the nation in which the students are not performing well above average academically and behaviorally. And socially they generally excel.

Where there are problems, why not use teachers to help parents rather than to accuse all home schools? Why should home school parents have to justify their actions? Why should not the burden of

proof be placed with the state? Why shouldn't the state set out first to repair the cracks in its own educational foundations, rather than searching for faults in the home school walls? *If state officials have any doubt, let them randomly visit a few family classes and compare the happy spirits with what they find in their own institutions.*

Let us then expect the state and other schools to abide by the same rigid criteria they expect of the home. For example, *there is not one state in the United States that has based its early entrance laws on systematic replicable research!*²³ On the other hand, studies have repeatedly shown that the homespun school does very well indeed, nearly always ranking well above the national averages, and some of them in the top final percent! We do not need double standards—one for the school, another for the home.

We believe that for any school district in a state to charge criminal neglect against parents who care enough for their own children to school them at home, is itself the crime, and usually against the finest of its citizens. To threaten to take away children from home when they excel mentally, socially, and morally in their home school is an astonishing miscarriage of justice in a time when there are plenty of urgent matters to occupy our courts. Yet this is precisely what has been happening from New York to California in an ostensibly godly nation.

Fortunately, these states are not without people of common sense. Recently in New York State word went out from the educational commissioner's office to be patient with home schools. California likewise has taken a far wiser and more patient course with such homes than have some other states with mandatory five- and six-year entrance laws. This tolerance is being increasingly shared from Oregon to Missouri, Mississippi, and Maryland. But the citizens of Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Washington have shown the most restraint of all. At this writing, their laws continue to require school entry no later than age eight, and they seem liberal in their interpretation.

If our public schools are to survive, we urge the state to take a positive, friendly interest in its home schools. Why not use

some of its best teachers to help parents better understand their children? Some public and parochial schools have caught this spirit and are treating home schools as satellite institutions. Why not have more of this supportive relationship? *The spirit and intent of the law, rather than its letter, should always reign where the needs of children are at stake.* ^{58, 59, 60, 61}

There need be no fear concerning job losses within our public educational system. Rather, there is urgent need to use more teachers to work with the home, and to give less money and devotion to politically contrived programs that force kids out of their home nests before they are mentally and emotionally ready. And much better informed programs are needed to make more homelike those early schools that are necessary for children whose families cannot or will not care for them. In such schools we need more of the homespun principles and informal methods outlined in this book. We need less of the school readiness programs that are crowding in on our preschools and kindergartens today and stifling the excitement of life and learning in our little children.

We give credit to those many fine parent groups, reputable alternative schools, and church-related organizations who are increasingly offering sound programs for parents who wish to educate their children at home during their early years. Visit and see for yourself how warm and responsive parents provide the greatest early teaching a child can have, by simply being themselves—consistent, alert, and responsive models. Mothers and fathers who read to their children will have children who read. Parents who work with their children will build responsible, dependable, orderly workers.

No schoolroom can match the simplicity and power of the home in providing three-dimensional, firsthand education. The school, not the home, is the substitute, and its highest function is to complement the family. The family is still the social base, and must be, if our society is to survive. Let's leave no stone unturned

to guarantee the fullest freedom of the home and the rights of parents to determine the education of their children. It is the "stifling" atmosphere of some public and parochial classrooms, says one New Jersey mother, that turns parents back to the flexibility of the home school.

While some parents prefer home education for reasons of religion, moral influences, and absence of ridicule and rivalry, many like this mother see the home as a "more nourishing place for my child to be, where he can make his own decisions, work out his own problems, and go at his own pace under my personal guidance. Here the social pressures are fewer, yet the neighborhood kids love our home." She adds, "My husband and I intend to maintain control of our family. We saw that we were losing it when our son was in kindergarten. We feared the influence he was bringing home before our other children. We are accountable for our kids, so we decided to retain the authority that goes along with this responsibility."

Well said. The hand that rocks the cradle still rules the world. Let's be sobered at the thought of loosening that grip. And with all respect for the many warm-hearted teachers in many fine schools, let us not forget that the God who designed the kids ordained the family to nest them. And let the school follow after.

[You can find Home Grown Kids in our eBay Store](#)

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