

# J. S. Bishops—'The Child; Citizen Of Two Worlds'

(N.C.W.O. News Service)  
Washington, Nov. 19—The following is the full text of the statement issued by the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the United States at the close of their annual meeting here:

## THE CHILD: CITIZEN OF TWO WORLDS

In the present grim international struggle, the American people have resolutely championed the cause of human freedom. We have committed ourselves to oppose relentlessly the aggressions of those who deny to man his God-given rights and who aim to enslave mankind under the rule of endless materialism. The responsibilities which we have hereby assumed are both grave and continuing. They deserve conscientious consideration.

It is of primary importance for our people to realize that man's freedom derives from his spiritual nature of man and can flourish only when the gifts of the spirit are held in reverence. Our present principles of action need to be evaluated in the light of that truth. We must go even further than our present comfort to be successful in laying tomorrow the world as it is unworthy of the trust placed in us. We need, therefore, to examine carefully what ritual direction we are giving to our children to prepare them to fulfill their future responsibilities to God and to their fellow man.

In recent decades, striking advances have been made in the child's physical, emotional and social needs, but moral and religious needs have not been met with the same solicitude and understanding. As a result, many children today betray confusion and insecurity because we have not provided a foundation for the harmonious development of their whole nature.

The child must be seen as a citizen of two worlds. He belongs to this world sure, but his first and highest allegiance is to the kingdom of God. From his earliest years, he must be taught that his true significance comes from the fact that he is created by God and is destined for life with God in Eternity.

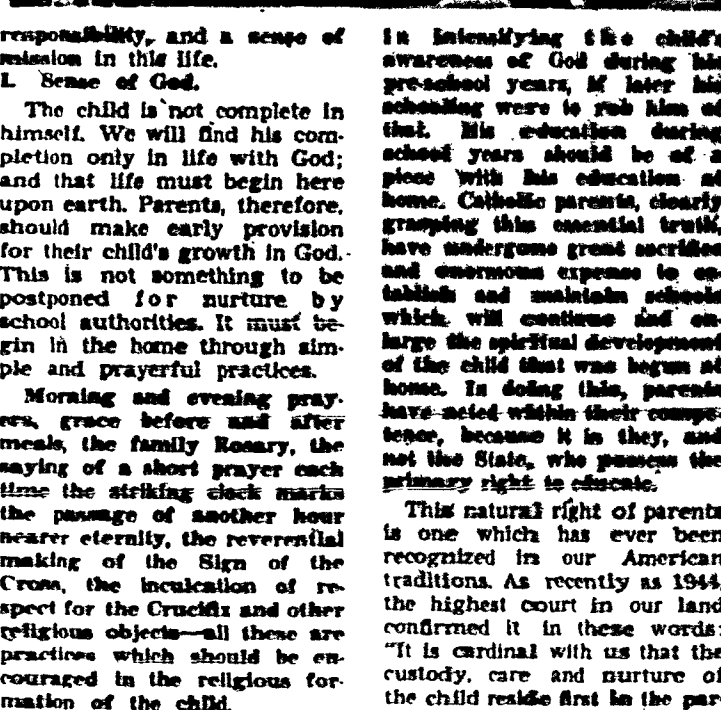
The child's prospects for fulfilling this great hope which he has reposed in him must be viewed realistically. He will be mature in a society where social, moral, intellectual and spiritual values are everywhere disintegrating. In such a society, he will urgently need the integrating force of religion as taught by Christ. A force will give him a complete and rational meaning of his existence.

FIRST OF ALL, it will arouse in him a consciousness of God of eternity. His vision will be opened upon a supernatural world revealed by faith which differs from the world of nature his senses reveal. He will discover a higher than this daily one and a better world than that he knows. Secondly, it will give him a continuing purpose in life. It will teach him that he is made to know, love and serve God in this world as the fitting preparation for meriting eternal life.

Thirdly, it will induce in him a sense of responsibility for those rights and obligations which are bestowed by reason of his citizenship in heaven as well as on earth. Finally, religion challenges him to satisfy his deepest longings for the Kingdom of God in whatever way he can. It may be manifested, as a principle of integration, religion will help him to develop a sense of God, a sense of direction, a sense of



Proper training of children was a chief concern of the nation's Bishops at their annual meeting in Washington. Photo left shows Cardinal Stritch of Chicago and Cardinal Mooney of Detroit with Archbishop Keough of Baltimore opening the meeting.



responsibility, and a sense of mission in his life.

**I. Sense of God.**  
The child is not complete in himself. We will find his completion only in life with God; and that life must begin here upon earth. Parents, therefore, should make early provision for their child's growth in God. This is not something to be postponed for nurture by school authorities. It must begin in the home through simple and prayerful practices.

Morning and evening prayers, grace before and after meals, the family Rosary, the saying of a short prayer each time the striking clock marks the passage of another hour nearer eternity, the reverential making of the Sign of the Cross, the inculcation of respect for the Crucifix and other religious objects—all these are practices which should be encouraged in the religious formation of the child.

No one can doubt that there is a readiness on his part to receive such formation, and if parents are remiss in giving it they will lose a splendid opportunity to develop in their child that habitual awareness of God which is vital to his full growth.

ONLY TWO courses are open to the child—either he will be God-centered or self-centered. He is made and destined for God, but he bears in his nature the lingering effects of original sin which incline him to seek the satisfaction of every selfish whim. To correct this bend in his will so that God, rather than self, will occupy the center of his life is one of the most challenging tasks facing parents.

In meeting this challenge, let parents make use of the strong supernatural motivation which can be drawn from the life of Christ. Let them encourage the imitation of Him, particularly in His obedience, patience and thoughtfulness of others; and let them foster the emulation of that spirit of unselfish giving so characteristic of Christ.

This can be done in many practical ways, particularly through providing the child with frequent opportunities for making acts of self-denial in the home. If he is taught to deny his selfish whims for the sake of Christ, he will not only discover a supernatural motive for his actions, but he will learn to give God that central place in his affections which God must occupy if the child is to come to his full spiritual stature.

Little point would be served

in intensifying the child's awareness of God during his pre-school years, if later his schooling were to rob him of that. His education during school years should be of a piece with his education at home. Catholic parents, clearly grasping this essential truth, have undergone great sacrifices and enormous expense to establish and maintain schools which will continue and ensure the spiritual development of the child that was begun at home. In doing this, parents have acted within their competence, because it is they, and not the State, who possess the primary right to educate.

This natural right of parents is one which has ever been recognized in our American traditions. As recently as 1944, the highest court in our land confirmed it in these words: "It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child reside first in the parents whose primary function and freedom include preparation for obligations the State can neither supply nor hinder."

IN HELPING parents to exercise this right, the Church stands ready at hand with all her material and spiritual resources. At infancy she initiates the child into the life of grace and for the rest of his days she stands by his side ready to minister to his needs. She recognizes his preeminent need for God and she meets it by providing Catholic schools for each stage of his educational development. She does this in virtue of the sublime teaching office conferred upon her by Jesus Christ.

When it is impossible for parents to take advantage of the God-centered education which Catholic schools offer, they have a grave obligation to provide for their child's religious instruction in some other way. At least they must see that their children attend Catholic schools and receive the benefit of other activities of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

Nor should the State, which has demonstrated a genuine interest in so many aspects of the child's welfare be indifferent to the inherent value of religious instruction and training for the child attending tax-supported schools. The continuance and well-being of a State based on democratic principles require that it show a lively concern for moral principles and practices which are firmly grounded only in religion. For the child who is not receiving thorough religious education, the State should look with favor on released-time programs

for his religious instruction.

MANY IMPORTANT services have been rendered by governmental agencies to the child who has been deprived of the care and support of his parents by death, illness or misfortune. However, it is a source of growing concern to us that in certain parts of our country there is a trend to regard this whole field of foster care as falling within the exclusive province of governmental authorities. It surely lies within their province to set up and enforce legitimate minimum standards of care for the dependent child; but the responsibility for his care should not be entirely assumed by them.

There is a definite place in America for the voluntary agencies of mercy—particularly those operating under religious auspices, which are equipped to safeguard and develop the religious life of the dependent child. Certainly the child benefit of the immediate care of his parents is entitled to those opportunities for religious upbringing, which his parents were obligated to give him. These opportunities can be best supplied by an agency operating under religious auspices.

**II. Sense of Direction.**  
The child whose eyes have been opened to the vision of God must be encouraged to walk by the steady light of that vision; otherwise he will follow wandering fires. He is too young and immature to be left to himself. His impulses and desires, so largely unarticulated because of his tender years, need to be given a sure direction by religious training. If he is to achieve that great purpose for which he was made: to know, to love and to serve God.

The child must know God. There is a vast difference between "knowing about God" and "knowing God." The difference is made, by personal experience. It is not enough that the child be given the necessary truths about God. They ought to be given in such a way that he will assimilate them and make them a part of himself. God must become real to him as his own father or mother.

God must not remain an abstraction. If He does, He will not be loved; and if He is not loved, then all the child's knowledge about Him will be sterile. Where love is, there is service. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." That is Christ's test and it must be applied to the child. He should be brought to see God's commandments and pre-

cepts as guideposts which give an unerring direction to his steps. In this work, the Church, the family and the school all have a part to play.

FROM THE TIME that the Church pours the waters of Baptism over his forehead, until she surrenders him at death to God, there is no period when she does not provide the child, through her Sacraments and teachings, with a steady inspiration to serve God. The inculcation of virtues, both natural and supernatural, the repeated warnings against succumbing to the demands of his lower nature, the balm with which she alleviates the wounds, caused by sin in his life, and the channels of grace she holds constantly open for him—all these are aids which the Church gives the child in directing his steps towards God.

Parents are obligated to see that he makes ample use of these helps; and in addition they must inspire him to love and service of God by their own daily actions. The home will be his first school. He will be quick to imitate what he sees and hears there. Let them keep this impulse to imitate, which can be the source of much mischief and lasting harm, to the child's advantage by giving him at home a good example of Christian living.

If this example is not forthcoming, the child will become confused by the contradiction between what he is taught and what he sees practiced. This confusion will be compounded when he goes to a school where religion is taught. There he will be taught to reverence the name of God, but at home he will hear God's name used irreverently in petulance and anger.

At school he will learn to cooperate and get along with his fellow-pupils, but at home he will be allowed to offend and wrangle with his brothers and sisters. At school he will be taught strict precepts of honesty and justice, while at home he will hear his parents boast of sharp business practices and clever evasions of the truth. Disturbed by these contradictions and torn by conflicting loyalties to home and school, the child will lose confidence in his parents' and teachers' powers to give him effective direction.

A CLOSE association between home and school should be maintained by parents and school authorities so as to facilitate an exchange of views and confidences regarding the child. In this way, home and school life can be better integrated and there will be a reduction of those conflicts which very often are at work in his life, and which do not receive the understanding and attention they deserve.

When we speak of parents' responsibilities, it should be remembered that they do not devolve entirely upon the mother. The father has his responsibilities, too, and he must not shirk them. It is not enough for him to provide the material means of support for the family. He also has the obligation to identify himself with the child's activities and to share in the child's life. If the father's parental direction is to be respected by the child, such direction should include that steady and stabilizing influence which is the father's duty to exert.

Fathers and mothers have a natural competence to instruct their children with regard to sex. False modesty should not deter them from doing their duty in this regard. Sex is one of God's endowments. It should not be ignored or treated as something bad. If sex instruction is properly carried on in the home, a deep reverence will be developed in the child and he will be spared the shameful experiences which he often encounters in the school.

(Continued on Page 11)