

26th January 2022

Teachers

“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”

Henry Brooks Adams, The Education of Henry Adams

I was recently given copies of two photographs of staff from my High School – from 1966 and 1967, my final two years of secondary education. These were my teachers. I could name every one of them, nicknames too – though in case some of their family members are reading this, I’ll keep that private. I could tell you the good teachers, the not so good, and the ones who were downright awful. I could also name the thugs who were vicious with the “tawse” (and yes, this writer had his share of corporal punishment in school). But for fear of several libel suits, I’ll not go there.

But what I do know when I look at these staff groups is that Henry Brooks Adams, the American historian, knew what he was talking about when he wrote a hundred years ago: “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” If eternity is what I carry with me in my soul, then these teachers have affected me deeply, and their influence on my life will never, ever stop. My love of words from an English teacher; my enjoyment of classical music from my music teacher; my interest in all things mathematical from various maths teachers. I’ve even learned from the thug that belted me so hard that you get more out of people with gentleness than with harshness.

These influences haven’t stopped. They’ll affect me for eternity, because their influence will continue in how I deal with others – whenever I am a teacher, and wherever that happens.

We all know about teachers. As you’re reading this, you’ll be naming the teachers who’ve had a lasting influence on you. But think on this. We’re *all* teachers: in education, of course, but also in parenting and friendships, in the workplace and community, among neighbours and in our congregations, with children and adults alike. Everywhere we go and in everything we do, we’re all teachers.

I hope and pray people will say of us, “See that one? Affects eternity? Yes indeed, for I know that their influence on me will never stop.”

A prayer for today

*O teach me, Lord, that I may teach the precious things which you impart;
and wing my words, that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart.*

Frances Ridley Havergal