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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION | *Reflections from Hodge and Dabney*

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*Charles Hodge on “nurture and admonition in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4)*

Children are not to be allowed to grow up without care or control. They are to be instructed, disciplined, and admonished, so that they be brought to knowledge, self-control, and obedience. This whole process of education is to be religious, and not only religious but Christian. It is *the nurture and admonition of the Lord* which is the appointed and the only effectual means of attaining the end of education. Where this means is neglected or any other substituted in its place, the result must be disastrous failure.

The moral and religious element of our nature is just as essential and as universal as the intellectual. Religion, therefore, is as necessary to the development of the mind as knowledge. And as Christianity is the only true religion, and God in Christ the only true God, the only possible means of profitable education is the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is, the whole process of instruction and discipline must be that which he prescribes and which he administers, so that his authority should be brought into constant and immediate contact with the mind, heart, and conscience of the child.

It will not do for the parent to present himself as the ultimate end, the source of knowledge and possessor of authority to determine truth and duty. This would be to give his child a mere human development. Nor will it do for him to urge and communicate every thing on the abstract ground of reason; for that would be to merge his child in nature. It is only by making God, God in Christ, the teacher and ruler, on whose authority every thing is to be believed, and in obedience to whose will every thing is to be done, that the ends of education can possibly be attained. It is infinite folly in men to assume to be wiser than God, or to attempt to accomplish an end by other means than those which he has appointed.

*Robert L. Dabney on the Blessing to Parents as Instructors*

Doubtless God knew what he was about, when he ordained that Parents should teach their own children His law. He was planning the good of both. Doubtless this parental work for children’s souls was the most important of all means of grace for the parents’ souls! In trying to teach their children they taught themselves divine truths; so that, the old-fashioned Presbyterian father or mother of a century ago, in teaching the catechism-lesson Sunday afternoon to his own children, in rehearsing the morning’s sermon to them . . . in memorizing Psalms with his children, in reading and explaining the Scriptures, probably learned more solid religious truth in one year, than our parents of now-a-days . . . ever learns in five years. Not only was the parent’s knowledge increased; but the most vital spiritual affections and principles cultivated: love towards his children’s souls, the lively sense of divine things, fidelity to duty, zeal towards God, careful walking before his children. We, in providing a substitute for the parent, have deprived him of all these potent means of grace. This is one reason why the standard of religion is so much lower among adults, than it once was.