No. 79.
The duties of parents to children.
Psalm xxxvi. 1. "Children are an heritage of the Lord."

There is no relation so important to society as that which exists between parents and children. It is the hope of human life and the secret of its continuance. It is the source of most of the happiness and of most of the grief of that long period of life in which we are permitted to share the enjoyments and sorrows of our children. It is the source of all our hopes and fears, of all our joys and sorrows. It is the foundation of all our philanthropy. It is the origin of every large part of the industry and enterprise of mankind. It is the basis of every law and every organization of society. It is the secret of all that is noble and beautiful in the human race. It is the key to all the mystery and wonder of the universe. In short, the relation of the parent to the
child of the child to the parent, in some form or other, so as it were, the surge in which society turns. This subject is one only, or it is seldom frequently to be sent to your sight, for its importance you cannot be indifferent. You look to your children with an anxiety of an affection, that none but parents can bear. They are intimately connected with all your anticipations of the future; it is not only what they are, but what they will be, that they are objects of solicitude. When we see in them these, who are to inherit perhaps the wealth, if you have spent your strength to accumulate, to bear up the name of character, as you have achieved, do we contemplate a pious virtuous child. The fathers are engaged not merely by that amiable and bright-beamed innocence, but by the hopes and promises of these virtues and talents given for the future by the distant prospect of the maturity of these qualities, which are now just beginning to bud and leaf. We look forward to anticipate the modest, delicious youth, the active, useful manhood, and the revered old age of him who is now but a child. And so on the other hand, grief on seeing a wicked and corrupt child does not arise merely from the melancholy thought, that the darkening of guilt are dimmed over the bloom of early youth, or that the center is rotting in the bud in the mean shape of dishonor, but it is from the dark, cloudless prospect of the vice in ordinary life, and the young sinner may hereafter be the vilest, most profligate man in the court of child. Indeed we cannot but view children as they are the depositories of the hopes and interests of society, as they are hereafter to sustain the offices and we must be, by to fill the places we now occupy. When we contemplate this future character and influence, they grow into an almost immeasurable importance; for we cannot for a moment forget them with indifference, if we reflect, how much depends on what they shall be. The poet said in the text says that 'Children are an inheritance from the Lord,' by this teaching us that they are...
blessings from heaven, gifts of the Holy One, he teaches us in his own words that they are to be considered. Like other gifts and blessings, they are to be accounted due to the God of heaven, by those who enjoy them. Being reminded, therefore, that the subject well claims attention, I will speak to day of two of the mutual duties of parents and children toward each other. At present, I shall dwell on the duties of parents.

1. The duty, to which I would direct our attention first, is one of which the neglect is so common, and by many it seems to be overlooked altogether, or thought of as a matter of indifference; that is, the duty of presenting children for baptism. I consider this duty important, not because the ordinance of baptism can be supposed to have in itself any saving grace, but because its influence is so tremendous, voluntary when the hearts of those who conform to it. How have been mistakes on this subject, or perhaps those had no inconsiderable influence in diminishing a false or incorrect regard to the act itself. We are sometimes told, that the water of baptism is necessary to wash away the stain of guilt, and that children are supposed to come into the world, by the grace of God, and therefore cannot be held responsible for their actions until they can understand, and accept, the principles of religion and virtue, that they will bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When you dedicate your children to God at the baptismal font, you are not to suppose that any peculiar grace or purity is imparted to them; it is yourselves who are mainly concerned in the solemn ceremony; you wishually engage to do all in your power to make them fit
subject to the eternal favour of God, by infusing into their breasts the spirit of the religion of Jesus. And it is on this account, that I consider the ordinance as important, that I am sorry to see it so much neglected. It is incumbent on parents to be faithful in the duties of the nursery to their offspring, as many as strong boys or girls, if there are few acts more likely to have this salutary influence than a public solemn engagement by parents, ceremony to be faithful to the moral interests of the young mind.

3. The next parental duty is that of forming the minds & hearts of children, furnishing them with knowledge & good principles. This duty includes the whole business of education, both mental & social, is the importance of it who can estimate? Education makes the grand distinction between savage & civilized society. It is the charter of security for most of the blessings we enjoy, the guardian of the privileges & rights which we claim. So that improvement in it introduces one more of less certainly whatever deserves, enlightens, God

ons the mind, whatever makes men happy & useful in the world. Of more than all, religious education must make us fit for the world to come. The parentage gives his child this treasure, gives them that, if not the hand of time & calamity can never deprive him. Possessions are liable to be changed by death, by a house, and unforeseen accidents. But this is inestimable in the calamities of fortune. You may give your children wealth, but how easily may it be lost, how often is it lost, by misconduct or misfortune; not a good education they cannot lose: it will be an ornament to property, & will add to any fortune. It will enable them to dispose well in any circle, to fill whatever office. Do you wish your children to come forth in life with respectable, good name, to do honor to themselves & to your name, then you must give them a good education. Do you wish them to be virtuous & honest? then you must give them a good education; for remember, ignorance is almost always the parent of vice. When we reflect for a moment on the vital importance of education, what can excite more melancholy feelings, than to see it neglected by
those, who are the natural guardians of youth, to see parents anxious to decorate the persons of their children, while they forget to decorate their minds. To see the spirit with which all has breathed into them, forcing them to give up in the darkness of ignorance, in the impurity of vice, to see them so careful about trifles, while they neglect the only solid groundwork of usefulness, directing the desire of the youthful heart to shadows, to the darkness, instead of leading them to enduring treasures. This long will it be before we shall learn, that the minds of the young, hearts of the young, must have devoted attention to other things are comparatively but as the chaff in the wind! Man, we are told, was created in the image of his Maker; & the image, though injured, has not lost all its original brightness; it is in the children, who smile around your bosom, who suffer to dimmed, tarnished, defaced, finally lost the lack of education to brighten, & purifying it? Will you allow darkness lingering in you, opposing the noblest workmanship of God, in their minds? Then you will not, Sir,
attention of parents can be directed. You must consider
your children not merely as they are to fill their stations
and their parts in this world, but as they are to live
for ever; and while you are refining their minds & purifying
their hearts, you must remember that you are educating
them for eternity. They are made for some higher purpose
than merely to engage in the struggles & ambitions of the
frenzies of gain, or to flatter while in the brave career of
career & politics. They are young imitators, & they should
be trained up to become citizens in the kingdom of God
of Christ & Co. The youthful heart should be placed
under the tutelage of the Spirit of the Lord, that it may
become ripe for honor, glory, & immortality. Children shall
be taught the truths of religion, as early as far as their
young minds are capable of receiving them. They have
 souls to be saved; & these souls cannot be too well furnished
with the knowledge of these things. It shall be for this
everlasting peace. They are surrounded by bad influences
enough even from their cradles: if these influences be not counteracted by religious principles distilled into

their minds like early dew when the fields, the great
reason to fear, that the young spirits may become prey
to the worst passions of the world. Teach your children
to reverence God, to think of Him as their greatest
Benefactor, & their Chief. Teach them to love the
character of the instructions of the Lord; let religion ever
be presented to them in the most amiable & attractive
light; let Sunday be to them the happiest day in the
week, & let them consider it their privilege, not their
task, to go to meetings: thus will a love for religion grow
up with the growth of their affections. I gather strength
with the strength of their growth.

3. It is the duty of parents to watch over the affections &
forms of their children, & use all that discipline may
be necessary to govern & direct them. Thus moral
tastes & moral feelings must be moulded & guided by the
gradual operation of daily regulation, unnoticed inspection.
It is a task, & it requires no inconsiderable judgment
to perform. It is not always easy to discern proper mo-
tives at proper times to the minds of children. Feign
an overhanded, uniform course of management. Nothing can be more pernicious to them, than to be subject to an irregular, capricious government; to be punished as an example, to be rewarded or punished at hazard, according to the feelings of the moment, & not according to desert. It requires a skillful hand to take up the weeds, without disturbing the good plants, that are growing in the soil of their hearts. We are so constituted, that in childhood, passion & prejudices come forward more rapidly than reason. Long before the rational powers have acquired strength sufficient to be guides & directors, many errors of desire & feeling are forming that bind them fast, & these require the firmest hand of the parent, but it must be discreetly exer. It may be more harm'd by some restraint be not put upon children, they will probably grow up headstrong, intolérable, impatient of opposition & obstinate in error. Their minds will constantly be acquiring more of the hardness & insensibility of vice. If the springs of kind & amiable feelings will be dried up, their dispositions will become selfish, fierce, insupportable.

ever before they come to be taught in the mildest school of the world. No, if these virtues be not improved in early life, it is probable, that they will be rectified at a more advanced age. It is not the lesser that occurs, when it does come, will come too late, & be ineffectual & useless? Will you then, my friend, in this important it is that you should control the passions of your children in early ages, before they become too strong for you to control. When the mind is going on in its new breasts, you cannot bid it stay, be still, as it will lay in ruins all that is good & fair in their hearts. But in regulating their passions, the utmost care & moderation are necessary, whatever defects should appear at one to be done from a regard to the best good, not from caprice. When correction is necessary, it should be performed with a calm & unruffled temper, for these are for things, not have a more exclusive teeming, than for a parent to inflict punishment on a child, in a fit of passion. It answers none of the purposes for which alone punishment should ever be bestowed, & so only to awaken angry & malignant feelings. The child, it seems, may be humbled for the moment, & submit to your justice, as
the young tree bends to the blast, that makes use of it, but when the storm has passed by, he will spring back with all the elasticity of excited feelings, and become more deeply rooted in his roots of error... For the most part, mildness of spirit will effect more, effect it better, than severity; but when severity is necessary, it should be administered with calmness without betraying the least ill temper. And the parent too should watch over the growth of the child's inclinations, and shape them aright. The young mind should be taught to associate its best ideas with the most worthy objects, to prize highest what is most valuable, to love best what is in truth most lovely. Thus what you say, or do, or indirectly, you lead your children to be proud of their dress, or to place their main delight in amusements. While mean while to consider this, how will these exercises, as a hunting or a heavy task, will they not learn to love and cherish the former, despise the latter? And so it will be with other associations of ideas, 

...The company of children, keep, is another object of solicitude. It is true, they might not be shut up at home, during the whole of youth; for then, when they come to years of discretion, they will be more likely to be corrupted by scenes entirely new to them; but great care should be taken, that they be not exposed to polluting and debasing influences in a greater degree than they can withstand, for it is to be feared, that while they are gaining what is called a knowledge of the world, they will gain only a knowledge of its vices...

...It is the duty of parents to educate their children to some honest and industrious employment. The child, who is taught to work in obedience, is almost certainly brought up to work. He must have some definite objects, or it will be waste in trifling pursuits, mere cares. If children are suffered to come forward in life without the idea that they have nothing to do, they will be likely of course to do nothing; if they have not some employment to engage their attention and occupy their thoughts, there is every reason to fear, that they will plunge into debauchery into all that vice, where a care of mind almost necessarily produces. A child educated to no business, no profession, will become an idle man; and the mind of the idle man is the source, indeed, of all vice, the unclean spirit enters, thence with him seven other spirits...
its more wicked than himself. If they dwell there, the last state of that man is worse than the first. If then, you would have your children form all the wholesome, that wait on idleness, don't suffer them to grow up without some employment.

5. Thus far I have spoken of the duties of parents during the childhood of their offspring. But still there are duties upon you to your children, after they have reached the age of maturity, if you are able to provide for themselves. Parental care & kindness should not cease with the years of tenderness & inexperience. When your children are gone from you forever, you are cast abroad on the wide sea of life; they will frequently need your assistance & countenance. It will still be your duty, if possible, to save them from the pitfalls & perils, with which they may be environed. If you are blessed with wealth, remember they have claims upon you for such a provision, as your circumstances & education have given them a right to expect. But whether this be the case is not; you can at all events watch over them, give them your counsel, commend them to God in your prayers, & endeavor to shield them from some of the storms which fall so heavily on the heads of the young. You have been before them on the journey of life, & you have gathered, or ought to have gathered, such fruits from experience, as may make your direction & your assistance of great value to them. If you see them treading asides to the broad road of error, parental affection will prompt you to reach forth a helping hand. If it be too late, to pluck them as a branch from the burning bush, if you see them sinking under the pressure of affliction, it will be yours to give them relief & support. The path of life after all has losses & dangers enough, even to the age of experience; yet is no time for a parent to desert his child, when with uncertain steps he is beginning to tread this path. In short, from the cradle to the tomb, the relation between parents & children should be maintained, all its strength & tenderness, & be made to scatter blessings along the pilgrimage of life.

In making these remarks, my dear, I have but just been able to point out some of the principles of parental duty, without go
ing into that detail which the subject requires. Upon these parents, have stronger motives: Trust in your own breasts, than any which I can present, to make your faith full to your children. They are your best earthly treasures, & if you can put more affectionately than your love to them, than by preparing them to act their part well in the world, stimulate the apprehension of their heavenly Father, in the world to come. It may not much that you can do, for they may not be spared ten years; they go with them, some may the last may be gathered to the grave. But while they live, be faithful in your duty to them; & if you should, in God's providence, be called to the bitterness of resigning to the tomb some of your little band, re-doubt your diligence with those who remain, that as you may educate them, to usefulness in this world, to glory in the next. When you yourselves shall be laid in the dust of death, would you have the anguish of reflecting, that you are leaving behind of children, whom your carelessness is your example have made worthies of infamy; nor will be a curse to the society in which they live, suffering pain wherever they move, & meeting everywhere contempt of destitution? If you be saved from

O then, who art our Heavenly Father, & we bless thee for thy mercy to us as a member of society, & we pray that we may ever be found faith ful in the discharge of these duties, which result from the relations of life in which we are placed. Pray that blessing may the best & finest of the affections be offered to thee. May these principles be formed under the influence of religion. We pray for the entire heads of families. May they be sensible of the importance of the charge committed to them, & may be bringing up their children in the nurture & admonition of the Lord, that they may feel how responsible is the situation in which they are placed, & may therefore exalt above their offspring, with the tenderness of fidelity of them who must give an account. May they keep the hearts of their children to religion. May they, with much care, & earnestly, be taught to them the morning of their days, & consecrate to thy service those to whom thou hast bound them by so many ties of affection, that thus their children may be their joy & happiness, & form their crown of rejoicing in the kingdom of thy glory, through
The agony of such dreadful anticipations, deck well the group of angels, satisfy their hearts with the principles of religion, and give them the desire to walk in the bright path of piety and virtue. May God keep them. If not in the heavens of their own accord, then the heavens of God will receive them. May God keep them in the path of his grace.

Oct. 1820.