No. 168

On the parental character of God.
Matthew 21:9 - "Our Father, what art in heaven?"

In treating of the subject suggested by this part of the PSALTER, I have already spoken of two ways in which He manifests himself in the parental character towards man; viz. 1st. As the provider of our wants with the wisdom and bounty of a father; 2nd. As the provider for our minds, giving them proper objects to exercise, strengthening, and giving them nutriment. In that, as He takes care of our bodies, He also takes care of our souls.

I now proceed to consider one or two other points, in which the parental character of God is displayed. We are

3. That a good parent administers wholesome discipline to his children, and does by to us. Correction and restraint are powerful means of producing good; therefore we use them ourselves, as therefore God
uses them. You would not say all the wants of your children, for you know that many of them are
many faults. To gratify the desires of children and
sometimes be the greatest injury, that could be inflict-
ted on them. They know not what is best for them; so can
sensibly distinguish what is really good and
is such merely an appearance. They see things
large and round, some of diminish others, and
their true value. It becomes, therefore, the duty of the par-
ent to interfere, to exercise guidance and restraint,
respect to their future ultimate good. If the children
methods them from some things with they deserve, or compel
them to others at first they dislike. And so,
sometimes, punishment of correction are necessary for the
good of children. When persuasion cannot allure them
to duty, the fear of pain or evil must be employed
drive them to it. At a time, when passion is strong, the
life is high, is the mind acute; such, more request even-
ly will not always be powerful enough to preserve
truth in the course of time would wish. There must be
thunes close to bring them to their own good: when
nothing else will do, the dread of suffering must be
brought in as a check upon it. In each of these res-
to, everyone is an child of God as are all Father.

With regard to objects of desire, man
are often "bat children of a wise age," as the wise man
placed by our great Parent above under discipline, con-
trolled, or restraint. The government of the man is exercise
men man; with reference to them, and the general prin-
ciples, which are the highest good. While we are at
praying or praying ourselves with what we call our mis-
also disappointment, it is going on in its grand simple-
ments, it is going on in its grand simple-

We find their wants supplied, and lives conserved with
mercy in such a manner, as to make us feel that
God is benevolent in the highest degree. But at the
same time, many of our desires are denied gratification
many of us keeping hallowed, many of our plans con-
formed in such a manner, as to make us feel that
we are ready and righted, that the ways of God are
not as our ways. There are a thousand enjoyments, for
which we set our hearts, that are taken from us, until
we began to find pleasure in thank a thousand open-
ing flowers, that withers; mingle their leaves with
the dust, before we have known their full progress. 

Your own experience will tell you that we are in what we call, even in a smooth stream, with pleasant prospects all around, but that we are frequently thrown into troubled waters, where the waves are high or the stream dark, your treasures of felicity, or we carry with us, are eens Does lost... But what a may be cause, God still makes the elements of the would conduct us to find happiness. In one may or another disappointment will turn our paths, and sorrow will come into our heart. We have hope in prosperity, but adversity is our portion; we have friends, with whom we promise ourselves long days of comfort and happiness, but the hands of death is near, before we are aware the tie is sever... In short, it is enough only to know that we are human beings to be sure, that we shall be subject to various trials, and of mourning. This is the condition, which we enter The from it, if has decreed, there shall be no discharge... And as the good parent corrects his children, so God corrects us. He annexes punishment to vice, certainly of the sort, He will not release us from the penalty, have done or later it must come, if we persevere in the ways of evil... I do not say, that God inflicts on us, transmurally to inflict punishment: but he has so constituted the nature of things, as to make us, by the laws of his government, to make we see the certain distress to the world. It would be very proper, if we were to suppose with regard to individual instances of suffering, that the special interpositions of the Ml to manifest His displeasure. This would be at once to place ourselves in the judgment seat of God, to know the pre-existing of omnipotence. This is too much of this distinction among mankind, and position to scatter abroad the firebrands of heaven, make them light, just where we, with all our passions of kindness, partialities, would have them fall. When I speak of God, punishing like a parent, I would be understood to mean, those punishments, which come in the course of things, as natural consequences. We will bring in disease, pain of perhaps death. Lingre impudence will degrade, impoverish, you... The terror of a guilty conscience will take hold of the sinner. Worrying his heart, with anguish. But you, it is these instances of punishment, which our God inflicts on us, as the natural effects of ignorance, upon those who have indulged in his indignation against light over the coasts...
Now the circumstance, in which such a state of action and attention, with such a presence in the enjoyment, is beautifully to display the parental character of God, is, that the correction, discipline, constraint, punishment are never arbitrary or indiscriminate. A good parent, when he denies his child any certain indulgence or privileges, does not do it to make the child tremble under such a law, but to make the child tremble under the command, because he would inflict pain in his office. He does not impose punishment from the mere force of existing authority, or to make the child tremble under it alone. No, he does it solely for the good of the child. If he could promote that good, without inflicting pain, he would gladly do it; but he knows it is necessary that bad propensities should be checked, headstrong desires turned into a right course, sacrifice of self denial incurred early in life, to form the young character to virtue, honorable usefulness, happiness. He wisely does it better for his child to suffer the hardships of discipline now, than to enjoy the permanent rewards of integrity later, than to enjoy the momentary pleasures of sin, to be made men towards God or indulging the vice of passion at present, in order to pay down the interest at last. Now only it is precisely...
be with the disappointments, reverses, of our feet to
with He calls us in life; they are dark & dreary, but
they may yield forth influences, that shall soften the
soil of our hearts, perhaps make stumps of weak by
long prosperity, of prepare them for all the fruits of the
life. Afflictions, self denial, of grief are in the brain of
the All, to us, the same things, that the little flames
destinatory of a lamb, implore when children are in our
hearts, the means of effects going on at last. Disregarding
feelings of the moment of the heart, the parent correcting
discipline the child for his final benefit. So our Lord
Jesus Christ is willing to be better to us, than we would be
to ourselves, to lead us to virtue & happiness through
sacrifices, pain. And why may we not extend
this principle to the government of God in a future life,
of suppose that punishment there too is remedial. That
it is intended gradually to muffle the soul from the
chains of vice; raise him up from the slavery of sin, to
remove the obstacles that separate man from his Lord;
to purify from the dross of earthly folly, making coagulate
the inmost or fine. Can it be supposed, that the punish-
ments of life, either in this order or the next, are vindici
tive, arbitrary, or wanton? Know that such are not
the punishments inflicted by good parents among the
human race, why then, should we attribute such to the
great, infinitely good Father of all?

1. Another characteristic of a good parent is, that he
gives his child such a preparation, as shall fit him for
usefulness & happiness in his coming years. He has regard
to the future; all that he does considers the period
of youth, as a forming period for higher & better things
in manhood. And this too, is as our Lord, comes us
through a scene of preparation for a more exalted state
of action & engagements in another world. What child
is to manhood with regard to this life, such is the
whole of life with regard to that endless existence
beyond the grave. The latter is just as much
a forming or preparatory state, as the former: just
looking as up, by our fulgence in this world, from
down to first beginnings; the more elevated & perfect state,
both displays the true character of a man & kind father.
We have just as much reason to think, that there
is not the place, for all we are ultimately designed
as the child, has to suppose that the school, in which
is placed to acquire knowledge, is not the scene, e
to this world, the world seems to have been set up for a mighty purpose; as that man has been able to accomplish, there would happen some thing a waste of strength in providing to much as to affect little. Reflect for a moment on the mental and moral faculties of man, the moral and mental faculties of the whole in an unity as the universe, as far as through the works of the all, who go on unto the world. He is continually teaching us, by the events of life, by the teaching of his discipline, by the instructions of his God, to hold ourselves in readiness for, removal to another form of being. The formation of the human heart to man is virtue seems to be the grand, mighty object of the divine in his dealings with man; but why this formation to man is virtue, if it were not for something beyond this life? The great machinery of moral concaves, as is, has not an inherent aiming man's sight, would ever strangely elude our estimate of our views, more confused.
on those consoling promises supporting hopes, on those glimpses of future lives, where nothing but much qualities will remain, God will look on the earth to find there the sentence of perfections declarative, not each must receive. Think you then, that all this was designed merely to fit man to maintain his round of labors and difficulties? Pleasures in this world, to afford him a little help lighten his burden a little for a few hours, till he entered into the tend. Oh no. They were intended, to purify the soul for better things, to bring away the dust of contamination, contracted by her abode on earth, to give objects employment, for all her best desires and ambitions, to schools; the heart to virtue excellence, to make man resemble his God, enjoy the presence of the Father; these are the things, and such others that are our now in a state of preparation for something higher, this we are truly literate under the training of God, as the child is under the training of the parent. You with the progress of your children, you are pleased to mark the opening of this young minds, to see their ideas expand, and stretch themselves out, because you look upon all this, as the promise of future excellence, the preparation for coming known usefulness. If thus too God from on high, looks down on men, in whom He insists, believes, because this is the preparation of the medium of access to the understanding, and shall hereafter be free. But his right hand to the employments of spirits, disembarrassed from earth, this £achman from flesh.

-Place those things, &c. to open our views of the parental character of God, as seems to me most of all things important. The subject is one, on all occasions mind; I must love to dwell, - for I know nothing so well adapted to connect with our ideas of God every thing lovely, attractive, wonderful. It is difficult to realize the relation of the All to us, simply as our Father. There is something so near, tender of touching in this relation, we can hardly bring it to harmonize with these awful, overwhelming ideas, with our necessarily absorbed with every thought of the Most High. We place the Deity far off on our imagination, view Him only in the distant splendor off this song. Is it possible then, that this Being is so near to us, as to be our Father, of that all these pure & tender emotions, we are bound to cherish.
coming, if with open arms wholly unreserved, he shall be tothetever again, when you leaned on her in the absolute helplessness of infancy, - the mother, who has bowed herself down to you, that you might have the means of welfare, who has spent days of toilsome sleeplessness in acquiring comfort & enjoyment for you, - then when you look upon these parents, the last drop of goodness must have been drawn from your heart & you dissolve in feelings of gratitude... And if this be so, how will you look when your heavenly Father, - who gave you these parents, who was their parent, - who has sufficed you in every want, guided you in thorny paths, shielded you in danger, upheld you in distress, inclined your heart to sing your joy? Then it be with less deep-seated gratitude, with rapturous emotions of heart, that you shall think of this great Parent of parents, this first cause of all that you enjoy even from other sources? Either not done strange piece of it can be so.

2. If God manifest the characters of a Father, in providing for our minds, we ought to manifest the characters of good children, in making the most of these high gifts from him... If God has given you mind, and you let these minds run to waste, so that when the dew of the
vineyard shall come seeking fruit thereon, he shall find none? If God has given your faculties, that about of require constant culture, will you suffer them to rot away in neglect and idleness? Will you spend all your time on these bodies, while their souls are left in the wilderness, of neglect, of carelessness, of unconcern?

No, let us strive to raise our minds by the better part, by improving, by reflection, by withdrawing from the vanities of life, by. contemplating the condition of our souls, and so clarifying the mind, as bringing down gross pollutions.

3. God displays his character as our Father, by the correction, discipline, self-denial, and sufferings, to which He calls us, for wise and good purposes, and consequently, we should not consider our children submitted to beneficial chastisements of the hand of sin, but under heavenly tuition from His omnipotence. The holy child is not to submit to whatsoever correction is proposed; a wise and pious father may administer, at least, such should be the discretion of the child, that he may induce to think, there is something more important than severity, yet he should believe that it is meant for his future good, and will conduct to his future good. In the same manner, we should receive the perseverance to submission, that all our trials, groans, and pains, are designed to be but the leading of His providence towards bliss or joy; sustaining this persuasion, the dispiriting miseries we might receive such discipline, should be the most desirable, humble, calm, and even thankful. The Apostle knew this well when he said, "we have not yet fully entered the rest of our possession, but there is much in store for us in that rest, that in another world, the heart may derive from the trials of suffering, the assurance of their never being to be; one circumstance will manifest it, any more than the child can become, being refractory, rebellious, obstinate, and subject to some temporary hardships of privation for His own good. To God to administer discipline, it is ours to improve it, if it should be made a weapon for heaven by its own influences.

4. God displays his parental care, being mitred, entraining us into through this world for both good and evil, and we must show our duty, the needful education of children, in conforming to the plans of the good Father of all... If then you would truly be the child of
God, use with unrestrained diligence all the means that He has given of preparing for heaven; aspire to these noble things, which shall cleave to you, when your body shall have fallen back to its native dust, after virtuous piety, love to God, and love to man. My knowledge that a youth spent in idleness or vice will bring on a manhood of disgrace and pain; just as will this life, as is the childhood of one who has been spent in the neglect of good things, at death, away in men, bringing on an hereafter of sadness and remorse. This, as that the fruit should hang on the bough of trees. Let us then so spend this life, the morning of existence, so that when the manhood of eternity is open upon the soul, we may have the comfort of gaining in the goodripened fruits of strong and deep habits of life, purity, and love.

Nov. 1822.

At home, Nov. 24, 1822 — afternoon.
At Salem (Mrs. Brace’s) June 26, 1825 — afternoon.