No. 164.

On the parental character of God.

1.
Matth. VI. 9. "Our Father, who art in heaven,"

No appellation could be at once more solemn or sublime than that, under which the High and Holy One is here represented to us: "our Father." In that simple word, I see contained a meaning, adapted to awaken all the best trains of thinking and feeling in the human mind, to place the heart in that state where it loves, while it adores, where it is humbled in deepest reverence. With admirable propriety of beauty, therefore, it stands at the head of the Lord's prayer, and gives a tone of character to every part of that fine specimen of devotion. It breathes a divine spirit over the whole, connecting every petition the consoling, elevating thought, that the child entreats, while the worshipper offers his humble age of the inner ones for mercy.
"And I hold it in reverence is the same in meaning as on exalted Father, and Father most high. Thus connecting the glorious and the kind, all that is holy and all that is holy in the character of God. This idea of the paternal relation of the All-mighty to man, our life, place I in the forefront of all sublime and venerable directions, for devotion, in order to hold it up prominently and delightfully to teach his disciples. Teach us, that this lofty thought should begin, that the first address to heaven. It is to the parental character of God that one, that I would in this discourse call your attention. And pray, I cannot but say your reason on the great oneness of God, in this respect, are every other system, that has appeared under the name of religion. Plans of one religion but this, that represents God as our Father, another that teaches us, we are the children of Him, rules heaven and earth. It seems to have been recover for the last system of truth, to disclose the biblical relation of man to his Maker. The sages of antiquity had many just, happy, pure conceptions of Deity. Though there was in their views an inconsistent mixture of childish refined ideas, yet in the while their thoughts on this subject frequently took an noble change. Part of the paternal character of the Deity, the seen not, to have formed the highest seat. It did once occur to them, that as we sustain the relation of a Father to mankind. There is something in this conception, which requires clearer light—a more spiritual way of thinking, than they had. If we turn from these to the common people among the heathen, no one will pretend that it ever entered into their head to regard the Deity as a Father, only from this, that they were scarcely able to receive them as a benevolent moral governor. In the East faith of Deity, just as true, in the paternal character, but this representation seems to have had very little influence in the habitual thoughts of feeling of the Jews, or at least, if they revered as a Father at all, it was as the Father of the chosen people, set of the rest of mankind. And I cannot fear our any notion, under any form of religion, with the coming of it, to whom this great doctrine of the paternal relation of God to man seems to have
been known as familial. No, it was not till the song of angels proclaimed the good tidings of God, that this most precious truth found an abode on earth. So came with its supporting powers to the hearts of men. Before the Deity had appeared, as a brightest star, as a sign, as a guide, as a light, as a revelation of the glory of a Father. Reflect for a moment, standing on the calm, holy, attractive height, not this new thing over the conception of God. Imagine to yourself only a vitious & venial God, at the head of his household, governing with arbitrary dispensing of happiness, watching over the progress of his children, shielding and sheltering them at every step, steering the development of this young soul calling out their faculties & giving them objects of excitation, prescribing voluntary command, imitating kind counsels, ever in the alert for that moral welfare. Seasonaiously cautious, lest the bright flowers of youth should be polluted in its purity, become the king of the world, using a parental authority with a parent’s wisdom, parent’s kindness, according only the good of his children. For the picture, only, to the character of God, as He is, as this Father is at the head of his family, suppose the Deity to be at the head of the universe. Do you not see, that it is the most lovely of all., anything that you can have of the All, shall out the heart of man grant to meet his God, as the heart of the child yearns towards the parents? All that is attractive, soothing & parental in almost, all affection & family ties, is this bond which associates those religious feelings, hallowed by the creeds of the subject, is unbounded by the imperfection of human... And when you consider who this Being is, that is in the parent, what is to us, the heart cannot but be set more more. For it is that Being, who has stretched out the heavens as a curtain, who walks in the reins of the winds; who has given existence, the rolling of systems, who walks in their course, who has covered them in their paths, who has multiplied the mighty elements, the legislative agency all around us, as well as bear a kind of thrilling testimony, who hears the noises of the ocean, near the mountains’ bed, among...
the clouds of heaven, by whose bow the thunder rolls its voice, & the lightening flashes through the sky, who clothes the earth in green & flowers when the Lord of lightning, at whose pleasure, emits its, till its stormy trembles in its course—this being is our Father, our Friend, amidst his vast & wondrous works, He is conversed with the wise of the parental character, His wisdom at once an infinite majesty of immensity, a power I have. The greatness of the infinite power of God makes the relation of a Father yet more affecting. The terms are, still more, unbounded heads, beside, all that is overwhelming by its grandeur, is often to be had in all that is attractive by its loveliness. Shall I proceed to speak of some of the things, in which He appears as our Father? Some of the most striking things that He stands in the same relation to us, as the human parent does to his offspring. It is one of the first cares of a good father to provide well & wisely for his children, to supply their wants with kindness & affection. But this He opens a large part of his labour & creation; He gives no little labour, from an effort, the same days after.

full}
provision for life's happiness in the depths of the
sea, in the bright expanse of the atmosphere. What
in the earth, & in its surface are treasures for our
existence & convenience. Summer & winter, day & night,
seed time of harvest, heat & cold, all & each, tell us that
God is providing for us. In the various spaces of the
earth are concealed those springs, rejoice to their
face, & flow along their waters in full streams to the
great ocean of the deep, where they are come to the
clouds, & again sent down to refresh & nourish &
soil. In that soil are contained the powers of that
that give support to the plants & minister to our
subsistence. From these every year gathers our food
& sustenance. There is not a habitation, that clothes
us, not a garment, that clothes us, not a particle of
nourishment, that enriches us, but comes from the
means of preparations in G. has established. In that,
holds where your milk, search where your milk, there you
will find provisions of the all. G. provisions too into the
another race of beings. But for us, for mankind, made
with a reference to our state, to satisfy the wants of
their station. No town that is from the founding of
a princess of a man for his children, nor an angel in us
acting the part of a father, one must likewise
include, from the abundance of provisions for our
put & provision, that it is to us the time of provision
as father - may. Nay more, that the argument is
very much stronger in the latter case, than in the for
mer, for the natural bounty of the one, no princess
supernatural, that of the other secondary & dependent.
But there is another remark to be made in this part of
the subject. A good parent does not provide for
his children in any such way, as to encourage idleness
in them. He teaches them to do for them, it is true, but even
as they are able, he gives them the means, urges them
when working for themselves. It would be no kindness
to supply the wants, in such a manner as to acquire
from the necessity of effort. For generous parent thinks
taking care of his children the same thing, as teaching
them to be industrious. And so it is, on the
provision of G. makes for us. He provides for us, that
indeed work, but he provides for us chiefly, that
the medium of our own exertions, G., like a wise father
will not have us to stand in idleness, is receiving
of G.; he will have us toil, for the objects above
mentioned, if the comfort we gain must be earned.


The means of supplying our wants are gathered around us, but it rests with us to use them: preparations are made, but we must apply them. The earth shall have power to support vegetation; the sun shall shine, the moon shall descend upon it; but without my own care of labour, the harvest shall not move onager, fields, soil it is in everything else. Creation, matter creation, in the heart of man, is the condition being made happy; the condition of earth blessings are blessed. In the tracts of the divine government, more another a beautiful, illustration of the paternal character of the Al: he not only provides for us, but provides for us in the most manner, binding happiness fast the industry is making the laws of labour; to the law of success.

2. But a good parent does more than provide for the wants of his children. He has a higher object own care for them. He provides for their minds. He sees that they should be furnished with all good knowledge, that the immortal part should be furnished to mind, while the body is well furnished with comforts. He then gives his child all the means of improving the spirit within him.

be fed the flame of young curiosity, a fire and shall, that would kindle into knowledge of the power, tree, ... And we, our self, our self, instruct us. His children. Peace regards chiefly, the enduring soul; when his bounty has supported, preserved out bodies, it has only done the best, the best of its mighty works. What an elevates, purifies, advertises the mind, whatever carves man out from the little, is passing objects, that crowns around him an life, spends him into the world of spirits, where all is permanent, true, valuable, all are from God, and the hyphen of his paternal wisdom, kindness awakens the best passion for the best object. Does the earth, here, is instructive us? Science, by all within us, around us. The instruments of knowledge, the faculties by which we know, are His gift; to these are suited objects fitted to call faith to strengthen, to fill all the earth of which they are capable. The world of nature around us furnishes innumerable beauties to be admired; innumerable secrets to be investigated. To examine these things, with the greatest man of peace have exhausted their powers; those objects of enquiry, a
have called forth all their labors, gungnernity, perseverance, you will find that the ore, each gall, source of fruitful and inexhaustible nourishment, is given directly or indirectly by man to human mind. All the arts, by which life is made happy, are refined, all the excessive steps oh man and I made in the progress of improvement, what each age takes from the preceding hand to the next, all the great stock of knowledge— these are so many hard testimonies that God is instructing us. Throughout the widths of the universe, there is a large and noble provision made for every thing, permanes the good at last settles into one thing connected with the heart's soul. All this indicates that God is teaching us, is furnishing our belts in part with its proper graces of excellence, as truly as the affections, parent, loves, to the mental excellence of persons, the children of his affections. But God has manifested himself as the God, inspiring yet highest, better knowledge, than any wise man mentions. Roman religion, knowledge, he has opened to the view of men his own glorious perfection of his relations to created things; it though it became
mood, as to more advance degrees. And thus, in the in-
denture of God, the religious views of the majority of the old
were adapted to their condition, for their imperfect. The
system of Judaism was filled with crude and unworthy
ideas on almost every religious subject. Still those
ideas were suited to their condition, for these
more refined ones could have done, to help with most
of the mind to grand and noble actions. Religious instruc-
tions have grown with the growth of culture of the
human mind. And at last in the God infinite
discoveries of his, sometimes fitted to sustain them
the most elevated flights and the soul can take to
ward heavenly heavenly things. The lips is the es-
tend chariot guide of all nations of all ages, it can
with respect to institutions & truths, and enter at that
day, the cause of impenitence has been going on,
against the good, has not been and cannot be informed of the
great ends of the most enlightened nations is merely to disentangle it from the corruptions of abuses
of men, bring its back to its original simplicity
heaviness. It is the harvest of the best of dispensations the
only one, which is adequate to all the wants of the best
most refined soul. When considers those things that
for anything, I say, G. has been used in the most
important voluntary treaties. Son too that in
this respect He is our Father.

Thus, there are the two sorts of proprieties of God, to
me, he provides for the body, he provides for the
mind; you make there. He displays himself to
His, i.e. He manifest the same disembodiments to
wards us, that earthly parents do to their children.

Pascal, but hence here to remark how different are
the degrees of interest, of attaining, who are blessed on these
do proprieties from the bounty of the Almighty Parent.

Of the case of G., as one I. takes of our outward condition
we are not insensible, at least the hearts, in its best
private hours, takes cognizance of the M. Portalet; but
to the proprieties of He makes for the inner man, the
end, we are too often actually insensible... While we
atone to bear upon our heart the remembrance of what
God is doing for us, as our Dear Papi, we do but too easily
cast away the thought of the most dear of valuable &
tain only what is important... We are perhaps only
acknowledged of being grateful for the external blessings.
ask what purpose or our friends. We are not unmind-
ful, that it is He, who gives us life, y breathing, all thing
who leads our storehouses with plenty, makes our fields
smile with the harvest; whose own is that trees,
whose own is that descends to give fertility to
fruits, by whose overruling providence our health is pre-
served; of our enjoyments, continued, who gives liberty
defend us with comfort, each one of which is engraven
with the memorial of His goodness. These things we
can see, acknowledge. But when we come to the soul
of the mind's eye, the operations of God are not so recog-
ised as so directly acknowledged. We are not so apt
to recognize the God, in all these good influen-
ces on. He prepares for our hearts, in the internal fac-
ulties of power at are the image of the Divinity in
man, in the instructions wh are intended to refine &
declare our mental powers, in all these objects of love
pursuits, who have their empire solely within the breast
lastly, in the eye of the Son, that moral medicine
of a disease world. For thos things, there is apt to be
something so shadowy & unreal, that unless the mind

graphs, itself to them by intense meditation, they
are often laid away among unheeded notices. But, you
for if the frame deserve to be remembered as purely of
the parental care of the Deity, much more do the latter,
by great most cheerfully, that even, even the most
common blessings, should be hid in the mouth of
the tongue, that the holy or beloved image of a Father's care
should be mindfully intempered with our ordinary or
holy enjoyments. But I maintain, that chiefly
blessings should excite a yet stronger interest if the
attitude & leave a deeper impression. For what has
for the body proves him to be in truth a Father, who
he has done for the mind & heart, how can we forget our own
fulfilly that He is truly our Father. Let us not
be ourselves in admiration of the Lord, while we forget
the greatest blessing. We are thankful for the food
of the body, let us not be less thankful for the food
of the soul. If the light of the sun in the heaven shed
the mind to the great Father of being, as he banished
its fumes, let not the light of divine truth shine upon
us & excite no holy recollections, no claim to sentiment.
no strong feeling of value... Of the mind, the love are
blessings, because they soften the earth, to make it very
fruitful, and who will not much more be grateful if
the influences of the eye, or touch, can break up the hard, throned
ed soul of the heart. To make it fruitful in kindness
grace... A good father bestows more pains upon the
mind, than upon the body. of his offspring. Such
a faith is God to us. - Good children value more highly
yours, more earnestly, the gift or culture of the mind
than of the body, if such children should we be to
the great Father of all.

This subject, the paternal character of God, is not
exhausted; if, shall another discourse suggesta
few thoughts further upon it... May He, give us the
disposition to take refuge in the arms of His paternal
love. In every scene of engagement or suffering,
the same unchangeable confidence to look up to our "Our
Father." Nov. 1822.