



“HALLOWED BE THY NAME.”

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF RIPON.

THIS is the first thing our Lord teaches us to pray for. It is characteristic of His teaching that it should be so. With Him elevation of character is the highest aim. He does not seek to make men rich or prosperous, but holy. The highest aim He puts before His followers is, “Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” Similarly, He teaches us to pray to Him who is our Father, and to say, “Hallowed be Thy Name.” The first of all needs is the bringing of the hallowing influences of the Divine Name upon the world, or, in other words, that the likeness of the Divine and holy Father of all should be seen in the sons of men, His children.

I. It is a Father's Name which we pray should be hallowed.

The revelation of the supremest love becomes the reason for the deepest reverence. It is not a modern thought that the realisation of God as “our Father” should be followed by a profound feeling of awe. With us (perchance too much) the sense of a relationship of love weakens the sense of reverence. We love, and the kinship of love seems to carry us away from the region of deeply respectful regard.

But from the beginning it was not so. The idea of “Father” was one which appealed with unspeakable force to the feeling of unspeakable reverence. If life was a sacred gift, with what sanctity of feeling should we not regard One to whom we owed life itself. This was in the prophet's mind. “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a master, where is My fear?” (Mal i 6) There was, in olden days, a reverence first, out of which grew the affection which could develop into a passionate loyalty. The first steps were taken under the guidance

of reverent fear. “The fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom.”

God is our Father. We had fathers of our flesh; we gave them reverence, for they were the authors of our being. Should we not yield reverence to Him who is the Eternal Author of all life—the Father of our spirit?

In deep reverence for Him, in whom we live and move and have our being, we may pray, “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

But the relationship is not merely one of origin; it is that of the strong towards the weak. The feebleness and inexperience of the child, joined to its waywardness and frivolity, expose it to danger. With tender eyes of watchful regard the Father sees the child as it passes through the stages of its growth. He watches; He does not always put out His hand to stay the foolish act. Experience must have its share in education. But He stands near at hand. The child will learn its weakness. It will discover that the Father is wiser and stronger. It will turn to Him with a reverence born of pain and failure. The knowledge of our own folly and feebleness teaches us to pray to Him who is wise and strong, “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

The relationship is one of affinity. It is fit that the child should grow up like the Father. We find how good He is who does good to the unthankful and to the unholly. We desire to be filled with the Spirit of Him whose love flows forth with such noble impartiality. We long to do good, never despairing, though no good seems to come of it. We long to be like Him. We long that His Name should be revealed in our lives—“written in our foreheads” as the Apocalypse expresses it (Rev. xx. 3, 4). This longing is a prayer, and this prayer is, “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

II. It is the fitting preface of all the petitions which follow. The realisation of holiness is the needful condition of