**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**MATTHEW-039. THINE IS THE KINGDOM by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."*

*Matthew 6:13*

There is no reason to suppose that this doxology was spoken by Christ. It does not occur in any of the oldest and most authoritative manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel. It does not seem to have been known to the earliest Christian writers. Long association has for us intertwined the words inextricably with our Lord's Prayer, and it is a wound to reverential feeling to strike out what so many generations have used in their common supplications. No doubt this doxology is appropriate as a conclusion, and serves to give an aspect of completeness. It sounds cold and cheerless to end our prayer with evil. But the question is not one of feeling or of our notions of fitness, but purely one of criticism, and the only evidence which has any right to be heard in settling the text of the New Testament is dead against this clause. If we regard that evidence, we are obliged to say that the doxology has no business here. How it stands here is a question which may be answered satisfactorily. When the Lord's Prayer came to be used in public worship, it was natural to append to it a doxology, just as in chanting the psalms it became the habit to repeat at the end of each the Gloria. This doxology, originally written on the margin of the gospel, would gradually creep into the text, and once there, was naturally retained.

It does not follow that, because Christ did not speak it, we ought not to use it. It should not be in the Bible, but it may well be in our prayers. If we think that our Lord gave us a pattern rather than a form, we are quite justified in extending that pattern by any additions which harmonise with its spirit. If we think He gave us a form to be repeated verbatim, then we ought not to add to it this doxology.

At first sight it seems as if the prayer without it were incomplete. It contains loving desires, lowly dependence, humble penitence, earnest wishes for cleansing, but there appears none of that rapturous praise which is also an element in all true devotion. And this may have been one reason for the addition of the doxology. But I think that that absence of praise and joy is only apparent; the first clause of the prayer expresses the highest form of both. The doxology, if you will think of it, adds nothing to the contemplation of the divine character which the prayer has already taught us. It is only a repetition at the close of what we had at the beginning, and its conception, lofty and grand as it is, falls beneath that of Our Father. We might almost say that the doxology is incongruous with the prayer as presenting a less blessed, spiritual, distinctively Christian thought of God. That would be going too far, but I cannot but feel a certain change in tone, a dropping from the loftiest elevation down to the celebration of the lower aspects of the divine. Kingdom, power, and glory are grand, but they do not reach the height of ascription of praise which sounds in the very first words of the prayer.

Properly speaking, too, this doxology is not a part of the prayer. It expresses two things: the devout contemplation of God which the whole course of the petitions has excited in the soul--and in that aspect it is the Church's echo to the Lord's Prayer; and the confidence with which we pray--and in that aspect it is rather the utterance of meditative reflection asking of itself its reasons for hope and stirring itself up to lay hold on God.

Notice, then--

**I. The meaning of the doxology.**

Kingdom, power, and glory correspond to kingdom, will, and hallowing in the first part. The order is not the same, but it is still substantially identical.

Thine the kingdom. All earthly things, the whole fates of men here, are ruled by Him. The prayer asked that it might be so; here we declare that it is so already, not, of course, in the deepest sense, but that even now and here He rules with authority. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and this conviction is inseparable from our Christianity. How hard it is to believe it at all times, from what we see around us! The temptation is to think that the kingdom is men's, or belongs to blind fate, or chance, and our own evil hearts ever suggest that the kingdom is our own. Satan said, All is mine, and I will give it Thee.

The affairs of the world seem so far from God, we are so tempted to believe that He is remote from it, that nations and their rulers and the field of politics are void of Him. We see craft and force and villainy ruling, we see kingdoms far from any perception that society is for man and from God. We see Dei gratiâ on our coins, and by the grace of the Devil for real motto. We see long tracks of godless crime and mean intrigue, and here and there a divine gleam falling from some heroic deed of sacrifice. We see king and priest playing into each other's hands, and the people destroyed, whatever be the feud. But we are to believe that the world is the kingdom of God; to learn whence comes all human rule, and to be sure that even here and now Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

Thine the Power. Not merely has He authority over, but He works indeed through all--the whole world and all creatures are the field of the ever present energy of God. That is a simple truth, deep but clear, that all power comes from Him. He is the cause of all changes, physical and all other. Force is the garment of the present God, and among men all power is from Him. His will is the creative word.

Thine the Glory. God's glory is the praise which comes from the accomplishment of His purpose and will. This is the end of all Creation and Manifestation. The thought of Scripture is that all things are for the greater glory of God. It may be a most cold-blooded and cruel doctrine, or it may be a most blessed one. All depends on what is our conception of the character of the God whose self-revelation is His glory.

An almighty Devil is the God of many people. But we have learned to say Our Father, and hence this thought is blessed. Unless we had so learned, the thought that His end was His glory would make Him a selfish tyrant. But since we know Him to be our Father, we know that His Glory is the revelation of His Love, His Fatherhood; that when we say that He does all things for His own glory, we say that He does all things that men may know His character as it is, and to know Him is life eternal.

Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory': whatsoever we may have lost and suffered in the past; whatsoever fiery baptism and strife of arms or of principles we may yet have to go through; whatsoever shocks of loss and sorrow may strike upon our own hearts; whatsoever untraversed seas our nation or our race may have to embark upon, One abides, the same One remains ours and is ever with us. We may have to face storm and cloud, and neither sun nor stars may appear; we may have to fling out the best anchors we can find, if haply they may hold on anything, and may wearily wish for the day. But the Lord sitteth upon the flood, and in the thickest of the night, when we lift our wearied eyes, we shall see Him coming to us across the storm, and the surges smoothing themselves to rest for His pavement, and the waves subside into their caves at His voice.

Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Then the world and we shall be guided right and kept safe, and whatsoever is true and good shall rule, and the weak cause shall be the conquering, and all false fame shall fade like morning mist, and every honest desire and effort for man's blessedness shall have eternal honour. God is King; God is mighty; God's name shall have glory; then for us there is Hope invincible in spite of all evil. Courage to stand by His truth and His will, endless patience and endless charity, are our fitting robes, the livery of our King. Because He is our Father, He will deliver us and our brethren from all evil, and by His all-powerful Love will found His universal kingdom and get the glory due unto His name, the glory of loving and being loved by all His children.

**II. The force of the doxology in its place here.**

It reminds us that the ground of our confidence is in God's own character. We do not need to make ourselves worthy to receive. We cannot move Him, but He is self-moved, and so we do not need to be afraid. Nor is our prayer to be an attempt to bend His will.

Our confidence digs deep down to build on the rock of the ever-living God, whose is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. We flee to Him for a refuge against ourselves. We bring nothing. We look to His own character, which will always be the same, and to His past, which is the type and prophecy for all His future. He is His own reason, His own motive, His own end.

When we ground our prayers on Him, then we touch ground, and in whatever weltering sea of trouble we may be buffeted, we have found the bottom and can stand firm.

But the Amen which closes the doxology is not the empty form which it has now become. It means not only, So may it be! but also, So will it be! It is not only the last breathing of desire, but also the expression of assured expectancy and confidence; not merely be it so, but confident expression of assurance that it will be so.

How much of our prayer flies off into empty air because there is no expectation in it! How much which has no certainty of being answered in it! How much which is followed by no marking of the future to discern the answer! We should stand praying like some Grecian statue of an archer, with hand extended and lips parted and eye following the arrow of our prayer on its flight till it touches the mark. We have a right to be confident that we shall be heard. We should apply the Amen to all the petitions of the prayer. So it becomes a prophecy, and the Christian man is to live in the calm expectation that all the petitions will be accomplished. For the world they will be, for us they may be. It is for each of us to decide for ourselves whether they will be answered in and for us.

The place of the doxology here suggests that all prayer should lead to thankful contemplation of God's character.

We have seen how the prayer begins with contemplation, and then passes into supplication. Thus all prayer should end as it began. It has a circular motion, and starting from the highest heavens and coming down to earth, is thither drawn again and rests at the throne of God, whence it set out, like the strong Spirits before His throne who veil their faces while they gaze upon the glory, and then fly forth to help human sorrows and satisfy human hearts, and then on unwearied pinions winging their way to their first station, meekly sink their wings of flight, and veil their faces again with their wings. The rivers that flow through broad lands, bringing blessing and doing humble service in drinking-cup and domestic vessel, came in soft rain from heaven, and though their bright waves are browned with soil and made opaque with many a stain, yet their work done, they rest in the great ocean, and thence are drawn up once more to the clouds of heaven. So with our prayers; they ought to start from the contemplation of our God, and they ought to return thither again.

And as this is the last word of our prayers, so may we not say that it represents the perpetual form of fellowship with God? Prayers for bread, and pardon, and help, and deliverance, are for the wilderness. Prayers for the hallowing of His name, and the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will, are out of date when they are fulfilled; but for ever this voice shall rise before His throne, and that last new song, which shall ring with might as of thunder and sweetness as of many harps from the thousand times ten thousand, shall be but the expansion and the deepening of the praise of earth. Then every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea, shall be heard saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."'

So we finish these meditations. I have felt all along how poorly my words served me to say even what I saw, and how poorly my vision saw into the clear depths of the divine prayer. But I hope that they may have helped you half as much as they have myself, to feel more strongly how all-comprehensive it is. I said at the beginning, and I repeat with more emphasis now, that there is everything in this prayer--God's relations to man, man's to God and his fellows, the foundation stones of Christian theology, of Christian morals, of Christian society, of Christian politics. There is help for the smallest wants and light for daily duties; there is strength for the hour of death and the day of judgment. There is the revelation of the timeless depths of our Father's heart; there is the prophecy of the furthest future for ourselves and our brethren. No man can exhaust it. Every age may find in its simple syllables lessons for their new perplexities and duties. It will not be outgrown in heaven. But, thank God, we do not need to exhaust its meaning in order to use it aright. Jesus interprets our prayers, and many a dumb yearning, and many a broken sob, and many a passionate fragment of a cry, and many an ignorant desire that may appear to us very unlike His pattern for all ages, will be accepted by Him. He inspires, presents and answers every prayer offered through Him to the Father in heaven. He counts the poorest prayer to be after this manner, if it comes from a heart seeking the Father, owning its sin, longing dimly for deliverance and purity, and hoping through its tears in the great and loving tenderness of the Father in heaven who has sent His Son, that through Him we might cry Abba, Father.