

Chapter 15: A Doxology

Te Deum

The text quoted at the end of the *Form for the Public Profession of Faith* ends with a doxology: "To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 5:11) A doxology, that is, a "Te Deum": "We bless Thee, O Lord, we praise Thy holy name!"

Similar doxologies occur many times in Scripture. A doxology is a song of praise, a song in which the church voices her praise to the Lord. The apostles often end their letters with a doxology. In such a doxology the confessors express their thankfulness to the Lord God. The doxology of the "Te Deum" in its oldest form is a confession from the earliest ages of the Christian church.

Christ the Lord also taught his people a doxology, at the end of the perfect prayer: "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever." (Matthew 6:13)

The most important part of thankfulness

It is no wonder that the perfect prayer ends with a doxology. For "prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness which God requires of us." (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 45, Q&A 116) For isn't a song of praise to God really a prayer? In prayer the church sings the song of praise from the heights, but also in the depths!

Thus the church has sung in the past. The prayer to the living God sounded on the shores of the Red Sea. And that prayer was a song of praise. The church sang in prayer in the wilderness of the desert. The church sang in Canaan among the vineyards of the Promised Land, under the tabernacles of plenty. The church sang in the temple and at that last supper; in the songs of Moses and of Hannah, of Mary, of Zechariah and of Simeon, in the doxologies of Paul and Peter, and in worship: from him, and through him, and to him are all things!

That's why all prayer in the church can be called doxology, also when the mood of prayer is subdued. We call upon the Lord from the depths, as in the Psalms, or under the shadow of threats, when we sigh and weep to God. There, too, the prayer of the church is the doxology lifted up as an offering of thankfulness. Then every prayer becomes an expression of thankfulness and honour and blessing and praise.

To him be dominion

These words from the doxology at the end of Peter's letter are also found at the end of the Lord's Prayer. "Yours is the power"! Actually it says: God the Lord is an autocrat. He has complete self-determination. He reigns alone and he reigns over all. Opposing powers mean *nothing* compared to his omnipotence! It is not: we have little power, the devil has more power, but God has the most power. No, it means: *all* power is with the Lord God. The power that the devil has lies also with God, and even the power of our own flesh. The evil one who rages, the Satan who hates, who wants to destroy and who wants to resist, has been given his power by God. The devil is working with *borrowed strength*.

This doxology praises the absolute dominion of God at the end of the prayer. This doxology says, as it is also explained in the Catechism, "having power over all things, you are both willing and able to give us all that is good". (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 52, Q&A 128). Here the authors of the Catechism refer to the moving prayer of King David in the book of Chronicles. David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly with a doxology:

Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. (1 Chronicles 29:10-12)

The church draws near to God and says: we are not important, but in all of life it is God the LORD who is important. To him be the praise! It is the same at the end of the confession. When you make profession of your faith, you may in the end give God the glory. And when you begin by singing God's praise, you later continue and complete that praise. There is a joyful assurance in that doxology: "to him be the dominion for ever and ever"! It is the assurance of the eternal praise of God!

The last song recorded in the Bible is also a song of praise, a doxology. It is the doxology of the great multitude: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory".

(Revelation 19:6,7) Your confession of today is a prelude to that great song of praise to be sung later!

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