

# The Lord's Prayer

I wonder how often you have found yourself invited to join in saying The Lord's Prayer and, like me, have hesitated over whether you are expected to say the bit at the end: 'for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever'. At Matins and Evensong according to the Book of Common Prayer we say the Lord's Prayer after the Creed without these words, but we say it with them in the BCP Communion service and likewise if we are using Common Worship. Does this apparently optional extra really belong, or not?

You might think this can easily be solved by looking at the Bible since the Lord's Prayer is in Matthew and Luke. But it's not at all straightforward. Luke's version (11: 1-4) is shorter than the version we are familiar with: it doesn't have the doxology (the technical term for a formula of praise to God: here, 'for thine is the kingdom' etc.) and it doesn't have 'as we forgive those that trespass against us'. It stops abruptly after 'forgive us our trespasses' (or whatever the precise wording is, depending on the language used). By contrast, Matthew's version (6: 9-13) does have the clause 'as we forgive...' But none of the modern scholarly translations has the doxology in either gospel. These words are not in the Greek New Testament either, nor are they in the Latin Bible (the Vulgate) which was Western Christendom's sacred text throughout the Middle Ages. However, the King James Bible or Authorised Version, although agreeing with them in having the truncated version in Luke, goes all the way with Matthew, providing 'as we forgive...' and the doxology. What is going on?

On one level the answer is quite simple: the translators of the AV used a Greek manuscript which included the doxology, a manuscript that they believed had appropriate textual authority. Modern translators, with access to what are recognised as manuscripts of a more authentic tradition, regard the doxology as a later addition and so do not include it. It seems that in some places in the eastern Mediterranean (the Greek-speaking part of the church) these final words of praise were added to the Lord's Prayer in the context of liturgical worship. We certainly have evidence of this from the fourth century. Subsequently, when copying the gospels in their original Greek, scribes who happened to be familiar with this practice would sometimes rather unthinkingly add the doxology to the longer version of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew. They would not, after all, be painstakingly copying the prayer word for word because they knew it so well. It's a classic scribal error: the inclusion of a variation that is not in the original text but is in the scribe's head. It was this inadvertent carry-over from a particular liturgical practice that was enshrined in some relatively early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and hence, with the best of intentions, in the King James Bible. And so in the Anglican church we sometimes say the doxology as part of the Lord's Prayer because of the textual resources available at the Reformation. The Roman Catholic church, owing its textual history of the Lord's Prayer to the Vulgate and its use of better Greek manuscripts than Reformation England had, does not say these words as part of the Lord's Prayer. The words themselves are an adaptation of phrases in I Chronicles 29: 11.

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