



The Doxology is perhaps the most often sung hymn in all of the hymnal. It is also the 'shortest' hymn in most hymnals – even shorter than the "Glory Be." It is a pure and unbridled prayer since it asks nothing, but gives all praise to God Almighty. It was written by Thomas Ken (1637-1711) who was known as England's first hymnist. The Doxology was sung at his funeral on March 11, 1711 as he was being buried at sunrise. Up until his day, most hymns, and the singing of them, were performed by monks; so his was a revolutionary concept for the time – and that first of all 'congregational' hymns in England was only a prayer of praise and adoration for the God who made them.

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow
(The Doxology)

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

Though the concept was new to England (of congregational singing) the words to the Doxology were shamelessly plagiarized from Holy Writ. O that God would give us greater numbers of ministers who would plagiarize their works and preaching from the Holy Bible rather than from other men!

¹ As a point of interest, in days of old on Royal Naval vessels without an embarked chaplain, the Doxology was sung in lieu of the Sunday service, the rest of the day being dedicated to as much rest as possible on a man of war. It might be considered that the average Jack Tar appreciated the briefness as much as the Scriptural content, at least early in his life.

The Doxology is most often sung to the tune, "Old Hundredth" (from the Psalm of the same number) by Louis Bourgeois (1551). "1 *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.* 2 *Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.* 3 *Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* 4 *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.* 5 *For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."* (Psalms 100:1-5) This is fittingly termed a Psalm of Praise. The full meaning is so very simple, yet exceeds in profundity all other hymns of the Hymnal in praise and glorification of God.

"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow Praise Him all creatures here below Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen" The single verse of the Doxology is a hymn of praise, but also a credal statement that summarizes our whole faith. Not only do His creatures on earth praise Him, but all in Heaven above as well. Even the lower creatures of earth praise Him in their strict adherence to His Laws of Nature which He has made an innate part of their being. The Doxology praises the One God of all living in Three distinct persons – a prayer that a Muslim, a practicing Jew, a Buddhist, a Unitarian, a Mormon, a Jehovah's Witness, or a luke-warm Christian cannot repeat with full faith and allegiance. There is no good gift that does not descend directly from the very hand of God. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* (James 1:17)

Though the one hundredth Psalm is inspiration for this hymn, I believe equal credit may be given to other of the Psalms such as the 148th:

Psalm 148

- 1 *Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.*
- 2 *Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.*
- 3 *Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.*
- 4 *Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.*
- 5 *Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.*
- 6 *He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.*
- 7 *Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:*
- 8 *Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:*
- 9 *Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:*
- 10 *Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:*
- 11 *Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:*
- 12 *Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:*
- 13 *Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.*
- 14 *He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.*

There is another great hymn entitled, *All People that on Earth Do Dwell*, by William Kethe (*Fourscore and Seven Psalms of David* - Geneva, Switzerland: 1561) which incorporates the sentiment of the Doxology with greater detail. This was the favorite version of my young people at St. Andrews. We often sang this hymn in lieu of the Doxology:

*All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.*

*The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.*

*O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His Name always,
For it is seemly so to do.*

*For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.*

*To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God Whom Heaven and earth adore,
From men and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.*

AMEN

The importance of the Doxology is no different from that of the Apostle's or Nicene Creed – it unites hearts, minds, and souls in the One Trinitarian Faith so that our song expresses the One Mind of God that unites us in Common Prayer and Worship. The purest prayer, and the purest hymn, is that which ask nothing of God except the privilege to worship and adore His Holy Being.