

The Doxology to the Metrical Psalms

IN recent years an increasing number of congregations throughout the land have revived the Reformation practice of singing the Doxology to the metrical psalms. This is also, incidentally, the normal practice of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, at its annual meetings.

By permission of the Minister of Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, we reprint from the parish magazine the following explanatory note which appeared towards the end of last year :

“ For some months now in Greyfriars we have been following the old Scottish practice of concluding the portion of the Metrical Psalms sung in church, with the Doxology sung in the metre appropriate to the particular psalm. These doxologies or conclusions are printed in all the music editions of the Scottish Psalter, and are also found in our books “ for the use of Visitors.” Copies of a printed page of the seven doxologies can be obtained in the church porch for insertion in any of your own Bibles or Psalters.

The purpose of *the Doxology or Gloria Patri* is really to turn the Hebrew Psalm into a Christian Hymn. The doxology has always been taken for granted in the singing or responsive reading (as we have had this summer at the Evening Services held in Lady Yester’s Aisle) of the prose psalms : *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.* Surely it is equally appropriate to conclude a familiar and beloved metrical psalm such as :

*How lovely is thy dwelling-place,
O Lord of hosts, to me !
The tabernacles of thy grace
how pleasant, Lord they be ;*

with a devout ascription of glory and honour to the Triune God of our Christian Faith :

*To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
the God whom we adore,
Be glory, as it was, and is,
and shall be evermore. Amen.*

Metrical Psalmody was one of the outcomes of the Reformation concern : *Let the people sing !* It was aimed

at ensuring the full participation of the whole congregation in the public worship of Almighty God. The conclusions or doxologies in metre are found in all the earlier Metrical Psalters of the Reformed Churches, but their place was diminished in the 1635 Scottish Psalter, and their use began to drop out under the more austere influence of the English Puritans. It is of interest to find the Rev. David Calderwood of Crailing, author of the famous eight-volume History of the Kirk of Scotland, making this plea in the General Assembly of 1649, which finds an echo in Greyfriars three centuries later: *Moderator, I entreat that the doxology be not laid aside, for I hope to sing it in heaven.*

In line with this more correct practice in our public worship, it has been resolved not to include an automatic *Amen* after every item of praise, but to sing the *Amen* only when a doxology-type of concluding verse makes the great Christian responsive affirmation both inevitable and appropriate. We shall depend upon the Choir's lead in this more meaningful use of the *Amen*."

Note: Supplies of a slip containing doxologies, for insertion in hymn books, may be obtained from the Publications Department, 121 George Street, Edinburgh.