

THE GLORIA PATRI

The Gloria Patri (which means “glory to the Father” in Latin) is a short but powerful praise we say in Anglican worship that goes like this: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

WHEN IS IT SAID?

The *Gloria Patri* is used most often in a reading of the psalms in the morning (mattins); evening (evensong); and compline services as well as in other Daily Offices. Taking morning prayer as an example, the Gloria Patri is when the priest invites the congregation to pray at the end of a Psalm reading, and at times at the end of the saying of the Canticles.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The *Gloria Patri*, is an ascription for worship, a short hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's often used in Christian prayers and worship to give glory to God. The traditional words are: **"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."** It means we are giving praise to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—just as people have always done in the past, are doing now, and will continue to do forever. The way this prayer is composed is short, it is often called *Lesser Doxology* as compared to the longer version of *Gloria in Excelsis* which is said or sung at the beginning of the Holy Communion service and other celebration services.

A BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK

Gloria in Excelsis gives recognition of God's eternal nature.

- **Psalm 90:2** "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."
Gloria Patri's phrase "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be" echoes this eternal perspective.
- **Isaiah 40:28** "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. "Again, the timeless nature of God is emphasized, aligning with the doxology's affirmation of God's unchanging glory
- **Isaiah 6:3** "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
The triple "holy" has been traditionally understood by Christians as a veiled reference to the triune nature of God.
- **Matthew 28:19** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit." In the New Testament, it gives it a Trinitarian structure. For example in Christian worship, especially in traditions like Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox liturgies, to give praise to the Trinity

THE ACT OF WORSHIP IS TO GLORIFY GOD.

In Confirmation classes, Anglicans are taught the art of saying a prayer. It uses the acronym A.C.T.S. which means Adoration Confession. Thanksgiving. Supplication. The first act in any form to adore him and praise him is relevant to the local context. **Romans 11:36** – “*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*”

The Gloria Patri echoes this eternal glorification with the line: “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.” This is added to the liturgy and said as part of the Eucharistic prayer.

DOXOLOGICAL PRAISE

Gloria Patri is itself a doxology – especially one of the earliest and most widely used in Christian Liturgy.

Jude 1:25 – “*To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*”

It serves as a model for many other doxologies by showing a trinitarian structure (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) and a focus on God’s eternal nature.

Protestant churches also have other doxologies which have become a favourite amongst many Christians but in metrical and musical form like the “Old 100th” words by Thomas Ken 1674- ***Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above ye heavenly host; Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost Amen***

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

The *Gloria Patri* dates to at least the 4th century, though similar formulations in the liturgy can be found even earlier, for instance, in the blessings provided over offerings given during the Eucharist found in *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, section 6, which dates to about 215 A.D. Here are why scholars date it back to this time.

- **Patristic Evidence:** Church Fathers like Basil the Great (c. 330–379) and Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397) make references to similar doxologies in their writings.
- **Liturgical Use:** The *Gloria Patri* appears in early Christian liturgies and psalmody, especially in monastic traditions such as those practised by St. Benedict (6th century), who was building on earlier traditions.
- **Anti-Arian Controversy:** The specific wording — “as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be” — was emphasized in the 4th century to affirm the eternal nature of the Trinity, countering Arian beliefs that denied the full divinity of Christ. The Christological controversies involving St. Athanasius and Arius see a particular emphasis on Gloria Patri.

THE GLORIA PATRI IN WORSHIP

Let’s expand now on how Anglicans use the *Gloria Patri* in worship. Let’s look first at how *Gloria Patri* is used in the Psalter. We do well to remember this. The Trinity is not something we tack on to the “end” of Scripture based on New Testament revelation, but rather a truth that radiates throughout the whole of the Bible. So, instead of seeing these Old Testament

psalms as “pre-Trinity,” these, too, speak of the glory and work of the Trinity. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, *It is good sense... “that Psalter is often bound together with New Testament. It is a prayer of the church of Jesus Christ.”* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

In the Daily offices, it is an invitation which opens with the Gloria Patri. The Invitatory serves both as a request for God’s help in praising Him and as an invitation for us to offer that praise rightly. Within the rhythm of daily prayer, the Gloria Patri draws us beyond our immediate circumstances and into the greater narrative of God’s life and work. It reminds us that His plan of redemption is unfolding and will ultimately be fulfilled. It’s like a vantage point—a momentary glimpse into the larger truths that shape our daily lives.

In corporate worship, this doxology reminds us that the story of Scripture is one of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. The *Gloria Patri* calls us into the greater story of Scripture. In the face of whatever’s going on in our crazy, frazzled lives, it calls us to remember that this is *what is true*, as it was, is, and ever shall be.

OUR CHIEF END

Revelation 19:6b-8. A great multitude in heaven joyfully praises God, celebrating the reign of the Almighty and the coming wedding of the Lamb, whose bride is prepared and clothed in pure, radiant linen.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism’s first question and answer used by the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions states “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

So then, the *Gloria Patri* is little, but it’s not insignificant. It is filled to the brim with pure adoration and praise. And the question it asks us all is, *will you enter into a time of praise and worship?* To fail to do so is to live in true poverty, with a truly famished spirit.

In conclusion, Although the Gloria Patri is a short prayer it captures the essence of the Triune God as seen in both the Old and New Testament. Our Anglican liturgy is rich in expressing how we should worship God and the Gloria Patri is safely embedded in the way Anglican worship God.

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