

# REMARKS ON TRINITY COLLEGE CHAPEL

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There are few places in the University of Cambridge more interesting than the Chapel of Trinity College. Not that the building itself possesses any striking excellence; there is nothing in the style of the architecture, nor in the decorations of the interior, which challenges admiration; it is perhaps, as a building rather below the dignity of its purpose, when considered as the place of worship for the most distinguished of our Colleges. And yet there are few places more full of interest to the resident in the University, or to the stranger, than Trinity Chapel. It is a powerful rival, to say no more, to the Chapel of King's College with all its riches of architectural skill.

The interest which belongs to Trinity Chapel is of an higher order than that which is due to the powers of art; it is one of religious feeling and association; it is a matter of heart and mind and soul. In no other place does there exist so impressive a demonstration of the religious spirit of our academic institutions. The large number of Students, the great body of resident Fellows, many of them distinguished in various walks of learning, the ancient names of glory connected with the College, combine to render the celebration of Divine Worship in this Chapel more than usually solemn and affecting.

It is not to be expected that all persons should be equally sensible to the impression of these things; the full effect is only produced in those minds which are capable of high thought and purpose, in those hearts which can feel at once for religion and for the advancement of human knowledge. But all are affected in their degree; and seldom do strangers witness the Sunday Evening service in the Chapel of Trinity College, without bearing testimony to the impressive effect of the scene.

Before we pass into the Choir, the Ante-chapel claims our attention. This is a favourite resort on Sunday Evenings for the Students of other Colleges: their own Chapel service being previously concluded, they come hither to enjoy the excellent music breathed forth from the noble organ. It is a place rich in the records of departed genius and virtue; stones of the wise and good of many generations; Isaac Newton stands before us. Often have we sat here on such occasions, and felt our spirits raised and our hearts improved by the influence of the time and place.

To a resident in the University it is no small pleasure to observe the several Members of the College entering for the Evening Service, and passing through the crowd in the Ante-chapel. Here are seen the teachers of every branch of philosophy and literature, Students of every rank and from all quarters of the kingdom, meeting together for the common purpose of prayer and praise, with one spirit, as one household and family. Here is seen the learned scholar; the profound mathematician; here the Students make way for the Professor, who, during the week has animated them by his clear eloquence to the investigation of Nature's Mysteries; here we may observe a College Tutor in friendly conversation with one of his pupils, taking this best opportunity of instilling a word of advice, and breaking off as they approach the place of prayer. All the particularities of genius and all the varieties of pursuit are for a while laid aside; all are seen under one aspect and character, as men and as Christians (of which unity the white Surplice, worn by all alike, is the outward symbol); all

have left awhile their different paths of knowledge, and are met to seek the Wisdom which cometh from above: in the beautiful words of Bacon, they are entering into the Sabbath and port of all men's labours and peregrinations.

It is not easy to estimate the importance of this part of the College system: we believe that the practical effect of these meetings for common prayer is far greater than would be generally allowed. Even the regulation which prescribes a *daily* attendance at the College Chapel, works secretly a greater amount of good than the world is willing to credit. There may be inattention and levity of behaviour in a portion of the Students; there may be in a still greater number the feeling of compulsion rather than the spirit of a willing service; but after all deductions, we are persuaded that there is a great excess of benefit, moral and religious, to the Students themselves, to the University and the country at large, from the ancient practice of daily College prayers. It happens in this, as in many other cases, that the evils attendant are visible and immediate; while the good is unseen, and rather germinant for the future than manifest in its present fruits.

In a work like the present it would be presumptuous to undertake the discussion of a subject so important. Our aim is rather to set before our readers a simple view of the College institutions as they have ever existed, and we feel that it would be a dishonour to the wisdom and piety of the Founders to offer any laboured defence of their religious ordinances. They need no such defence. We shall therefore content ourselves with one or two further remarks, which may tend to excite a deeper consideration of the subject.

The practice of College worship is perhaps generally viewed as a means of forming or strengthening the good habit of devotion; but may it not also be worked upon as an *evidence* for the truth of our Religion? Is it not something to strengthen the faith of one who comes hither from the home of his youth, to find that in this seat of learning he is still the member of an household where Christian prayer is daily offered up? Is it not something in the nature of an evidence, to feel himself borne in to the House of Prayer with such a stream as this, in company with some of the highest intellects and ablest scholars of his country? who thus manifest that their learning has not made them ashamed to profess their Christian faith? We do not hesitate to say, that it is precisely that evidence which a young man at this period of life should have set before him; the testimony of mature minds, who have thought and examined for themselves. It is an evidence which speaks to his heart as well as to his head; a practical evidence, which will strengthen and confirm the argumentative and historical proofs presented to him in the course of his Academical Studies.

We need not point out the bearing of the foregoing remarks on the obligations of the resident Fellows and Masters of Arts, with respect to participation in the College worship. It is obvious that the value and spirit of the institution depends much upon them; they are now exempt from the operation of positive rules, though they have bound themselves to the practice by promise of obedience to the Statutes; their service may appear perfect freedom; and if they should leave the College Chapel to the few of their number whose office requires attendance and to the Students *in statu pupillari*, we could not then be surprised if the practice of College prayer should come to be considered by the world as a mere matter of discipline, an occasion of muster. But this we are persuaded will never be the case; the prevalent feeling throughout the University tends strongly to uphold the system of social worship; there is good hope that posterity will ever continue to fulfil the

intention of the College Founders, and verify the words inscribed upon the exterior over the East Window of Trinity Chapel,

Domus mea Domus orationis vocabitur<sup>1</sup>

But it is time to return to the scene before us. We will not attempt to describe the effect of the Chapel itself, filled as it is in all its length and breadth: the Master in his seat of dignity, with the young Noblemen on his right hand; along the upper row of seats the Fellows, below them the Scholars of the Foundation; the great body of Students filling the central space and all below to the East end as far as the eye can reach, an apparently innumerable company, robed in white. The Choir are placed in raised seats on either side about midway down the length of the Chapel. There is but one visible blemish which mars the impression of the view, and that is, the person who walks up and down among the rows of Students, with a long roll in his hand, on which he notes those who are present. It is much to be wished that this necessary part of the system could be less visibly managed; this walking personage is but an awkward representation of the College authority, a poor personification of the Sage Discipline watching over the religious habits of her sons. But it is always more easy to complain than to amend; we confess that we know of no better device for the purpose, and must leave the problem as one deserving the attention of the College officers who have the charge of this department.

If we might choose an anthem peculiarly appropriate to the place, it should be that fine one by Dr. Boyce, out of the twenty-eighth Chapter of Job, from the twelfth verse to the end of the Chapter.

“Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?  
Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.  
The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me.” &c.

To hear this anthem performed (as we have heard it) by a full Choir; to hear it in an assembly like this, composed almost exclusively of those engaged in the pursuit of knowledge; the words, as it were, leading each in turn to confess that wisdom is not to be found in any of their own peculiar paths, and closing at last with a burst of voices in the full united acknowledgment of the simple but solemn truth,

“Behold! The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.”

– this is indeed one of the most powerful triumphs of Church music, whose solemn touches are here rendered irresistible by their union with the striking words of Scripture, and with the whole power of local association.

And at such a time the thought can scarcely fail to occur, that this is the very place where the searchers after truth have paid their devotions for ages past; where Francis Bacon offered up the pure prayers of his opening heart, as yet unspoiled by the world’s ambition; where Newton confessed himself a child in knowledge; where the youthful Cotes and his beloved companion, Daniel Lock, walked together in the house of God as friends. These remembrances of the past, blending with the present sight and holy sounds, moved the mind in a manner which may be felt but cannot be described. It is the hallowing of human science and learning; it is the homage of man’s intellectual and spiritual faculties to the glorious Father of Spirits.

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<sup>1</sup> My house shall be called a house of prayer. Isaiah 56: 7, Matthew 21: 13

And now while the deep voiced organ is pouring forth its spirit-stirring notes of dismissal, let us dwell for a few minutes on the monuments of the Ante-chapel, reserving Newton's statue for the last object, when the throng has passed away. Surely no place is so appropriate for the records of the dead, as the entrance to the House of Prayer. This is the situation where the good and wise of former days 'being dead yet speak' with the best effect to their living followers. Their presence forms a suitable transition from the world without to the temple within; they assist the feeling of devotional reverence; they connect us with the past and with the future; "they speak of hope and move the soul to prayer." Nor can we forbid ourselves to believe that this is the situation most congenial to the feelings of the deceased themselves; the place which a departing lover of Wisdom would have chosen for his last repose; –

"When the Lord shall call me hence  
Lay my limbs in holy ground;  
Where the daily choral sound  
Of prayer and hymn may softly glide  
Above my grave at noon and eventide."

Many of the inscriptions are on the gravestone in the floor, and these are consequently but seldom noticed. It is worth while to glance downwards and mark the spirit of Christian hope which breathes in the "dull cold marble"<sup>2</sup>.

Here is a stone inscribed to the memory of the accomplished George Chare, who has also a tablet on the South Wall.

Another, on a brass plate, the Christian spirit of which may extort pardon even from Scholars for the faults of the verse –

vixit ut hic Socius iusta cum laude bonorum  
Johannes Beaumont, Scripturæ prece fidelis  
sic vite tenuit moribundum certa futuræ  
spes, animam Christus cepit, lapis hic tegit ossa.  
obit sexto Junii. 1565

The same faith and hope may be read in the mural tablets.

FRANCISCUS HOOPER S.T.P.  
Hujusce Collegii, quod unicè amavit, Socius Senior  
Post multos annos in eodem feliciter completos  
Hic tandem voluit requiescere,  
Donec de Morte ipsâ victor Resurrexerit.  
natus Jan. 10. 1694 obiit Maij 18. 1763

And again at the close of an inscription to the memory of a Scholar of the College (the most recent of the monuments, and appropriately placed of the door to the student's Vestry) we read the simple word

**ΑΝΑΣΤΗΣΕΤΑΙ<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare: Henry VIII, III.ii

<sup>3</sup> He shall rise again; from the memorial of Thomas Kynaston Selwyn.

Here are none of the lugubrious wailings of heathen antiquity'; no classical solecisms in religion; these are the records of men who "died in faith"<sup>4</sup>; they speak the language of manly hope: it is the burial place of Christian Scholars.

Two Epitaphs, sacred to the memory of a pair of friends and nearly equals in age, we must transcribe.

One is to Daniel Lock, with a powerful bust by Roubiliac.

Hic juxta Cineres cari Cotesii,  
Suos etiam requiescere voluit  
DANIEL LOCK hujus Collegii A.M.  
Vir si quis alius,  
Architecturæ, Sculpturæ, Picturæ, Musicæ,  
Omniumque bonarum Artium amantissimus:  
Nec pudet inventas Vitam excoluisse per artes.  
Obiit 15 Jan<sup>rii</sup> 1754. æt: 69.

The other is that of Roger Cotes, the first Plumian Professor, the friend of Newton, and acknowledged to have been in his day the first mathematician of his University. He published at Newton's request the second Edition of the Principia; and was only prevented by his early death from marching in the van of Newton's army and extending the conquests of the new philosophy to the bounds of the universe. It is interesting to learn that such powers of mind were accompanied by moral virtues and clothed in the outward form of beauty. The inscription is by Dr. Bentley.

H.S.E.  
Rogerus Roberti filius COTES  
Collegi [sic] hujus S Trinitatis socius  
Astronomiæ et Experimentalis  
Philosophiæ Professor Plumianus;  
qui immatura Morte præreptus,  
Pauca quidem ingenij sui Pignora reliquit;  
Sed egregia, sed admiranda,  
ex inaccessis Matheseos Penetralibus  
Felici sol[?]ertia tum primum eruta:  
post magnum illum Newtonum  
Societatis hujus Spes altera, et decus gemellum:  
Cui ad Summam Doctrinæ Laudem  
Omnes Morum Virtutumque Dotes  
In cumulum accesserunt:  
Eo magis spectabiles amabilesque,  
Quod in formoso Corpore Gratiores venirent.  
Natus Burbagij in Agro Leicestriensi Iul. X MDCLXXXII.  
Obiit Iun. V. MDCCXVI.

On the West wall are tablets to the three great critical Scholars, Bentley Porson and Dobree<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 11: 13 – the text used on the First World War memorial.

<sup>5</sup> The tablets to Porson and Dobree were later moved to the north wall, and that to Bentley removed. Bentley's grave is near the altar.

M.S. VIRI REVERENDI PETRI PAULI DOBREE A.M.  
EX INSULA GUERNSEY ORIUNDI,  
COLLEGII HUIJUS S.S. TRINITATIS SOCII,  
ET GRÆCÆ LINGUÆ IN HAC ACADEMIA PROFESSORIS REGII.  
VIR ERAT PROBUS, CANDIDUS, SIMPLEX  
A FASTU OMNI AC FUCO ALIENISSIMUS,  
SERMONE COMIS, ANIMO ÆQUABILIS AC LENIS,  
ITA TAMEN UT FACILE COMMOVERETUR,  
SI VEL PATRIÆ VEL SINGULORUM JURA IN DISCRIMEN PUTARET ADDUCI.  
AD HAS VIRTUTES ACCESSERUNT  
INGENIUM ACUTUM, JUDICIUM SANUM,  
INDEFESSA PRO VALETUDINE INDUSTRIA,  
MAGNA PHILOSOPHIÆ MORALIS AC THEOLOGIÆ,  
MAXIMA LITTERARUM LATINARUM AC GRÆCARUM PERITIA,  
TANTA IN CORRUPTIS VETERUM AU[C]TORUM LOCIS  
DETEGENDIS SAGACITAS, EMENDANDIS FELICITAS,  
UT PORSONI, CUJUS IN FAMILIARITATE INTIME ERAT VERSATUS,  
VESTIGIA VIX IMPARI GRESSU SEQUI VIDERETUR.  
IMMATURA MORTE PRÆREPTUS EST,  
A.D. MDCCCXXV, ÆTATIS XLIII.  
‘SOROR UNICA PONI CURAVIT.’

The inscription is by Bishop Kaye, and presents a faithful and affectionate delineation of the character of his friend.

But where is the monument of Isaac Barrow? the Master of the College, the teacher of Newton?<sup>6</sup> This is a question often asked, and the answer is far from satisfactory. There is no monument to Isaac Barrow in the College which he loved and adorned. He died in London, and his monument is in Westminster Abbey. In a sketch appended to his works, the Editor remarks “Had it not been inconvenient to carry him to Cambridge, wit and elegance had paid their tribute for the honour he had done them.” Barrow removed to this College from Peterhouse in 1645, took his degree of B.A. in 1649, and was soon after elected Fellow of the College. He was a candidate for the Greek Professorship on the resignation of Dr. Duport, and not succeeding, betook himself to foreign travel. In 1660 he was elected Greek Professor; the same year in which Newton was admitted a member of the College. Three years after this the Lucasian professorship of mathematics was instituted, and Barrow was named as the first Professor, resigning the Greek chair. After discharging the duties of his office with ability and honour for nine years, he left it to be filled by one whose early studies he had directed and whose rising powers he had watched with delighted and affection – Isaac Newton – then in his thirtieth year. Barrow from this time gave himself to divinity; he was made Master of the College in 1672, in which honoured situation he remained till his death in 1677. Is it not a marvel that such a man should be without a memorial in this Chapel? But he has left his own imperishable monument, a record which will be legible to all posterity when brass and marble shall have mouldered away.

And now that we are left almost alone, let us turn to Newton himself; the ever present glory of this College. His statue which is Roubiliac’s masterpiece is now seen to great advantage, being set free from the iron railing which once enclosed it rather incongruously. This was done at the suggestion of Sir F. Chantrey in 1833, who also advised the darkening a portion of the wall behind, by which the figure is thrown out in full relief.

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<sup>6</sup> The statue of Isaac Barrow was made in 1858.

It is a monument to be gazed at in silence and stillness; for such is the expression of the whole figure: the countenance is full of patient thought and calm self possession; the philosopher is alone with nature and with God. He holds in his hand the prism of glass with which he separated the sunbeam, "offspring of heaven first-born<sup>7</sup>," into its seven distinct rays. But the statue represents far more than the circumstances of this particular discovery; it is an excellent impersonation of the whole philosophic character of the man, answering admirably to the description which he gives of his own habits of investigation: "I keep the subject of my enquiry constantly before me and wait till the first dawning opens gradually, by little and little, into a full and clear light." Some may observe a slight expression of pleasure in the countenance, indication that the light has dawned upon the enquirer and that he is rejoicing to follow his guidance. And perhaps there is even more than this; something beyond the philosophic character. The eye uplifted to heaven, the happy serenity which pervades the features, may well persuade us (and in this hallowed place who can refuse to believe?) that in this outward form was enshrined a spirit full of immortality; a soul touched with "the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us."<sup>8</sup>

Before we part, we would advise all the sons of Alma Mater, who desire to follow Newton's steps in Newton's spirit, to come hither frequently: and after listening to the solemn strains of the Evening Chant, let them gaze awhile before they depart on the sculptured form of the best and wisest of British Philosophers.

*pp. 89-98*

## NEWTON'S STATUE

The statue of Newton in Trinity College Chapel, when first completed, had the mouth closed. Some friend and connoisseur having come to the artist's studio to view the work immediately remarked this as a defect and expressed his opinion to the artist. Roubiliac went to bed, but could not sleep: he rose early, set to work, and made it what it is at present; and certainly the result of this bold experiment is admirable. The good taste of the artist was not greater than his candour in admitting an error in that stage of his work, or more remarkable than the confidence which he possessed in his own skill to correct it.

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<sup>7</sup> Milton: Paradise Lost, Book III

<sup>8</sup> Luke 1: 78