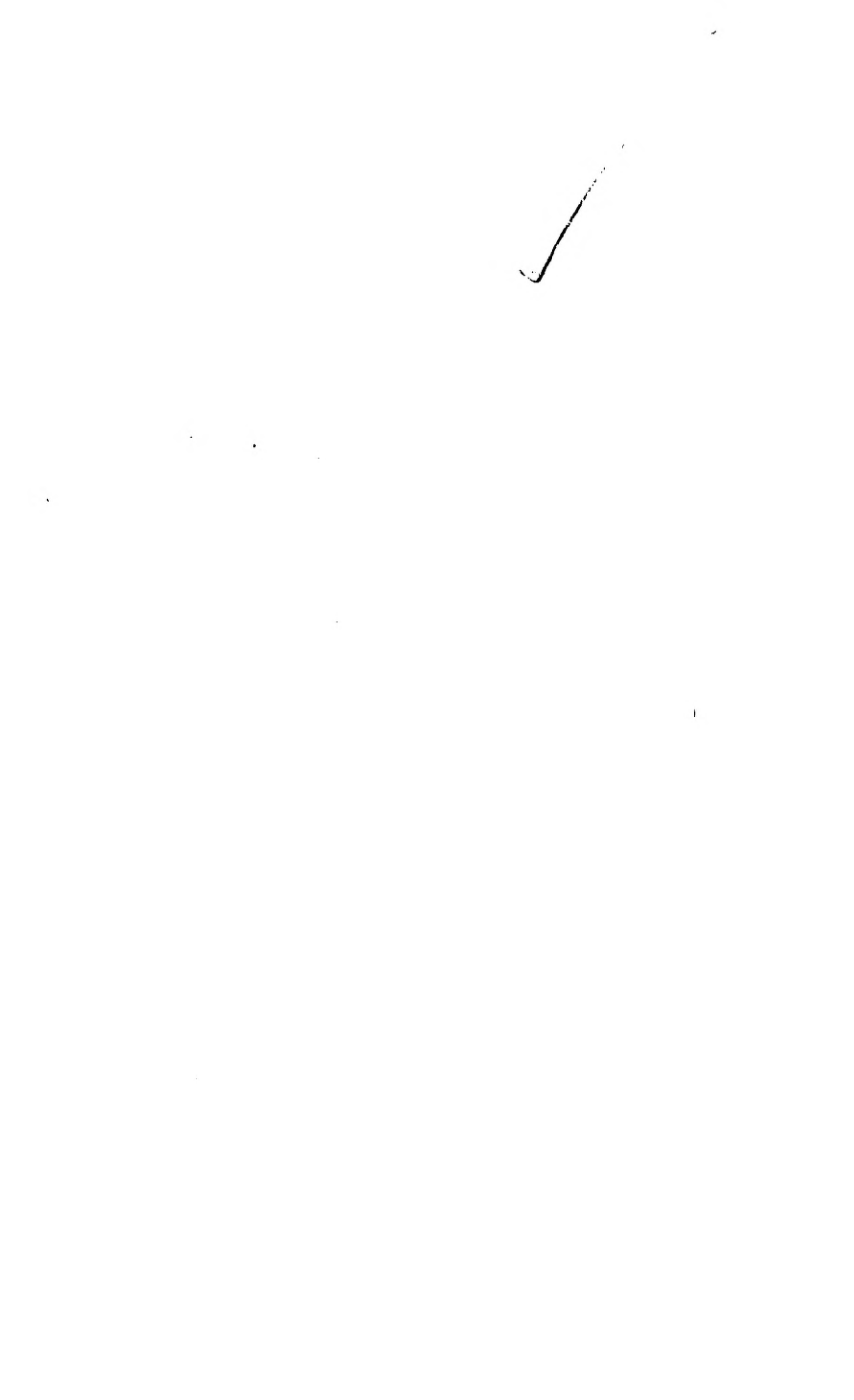
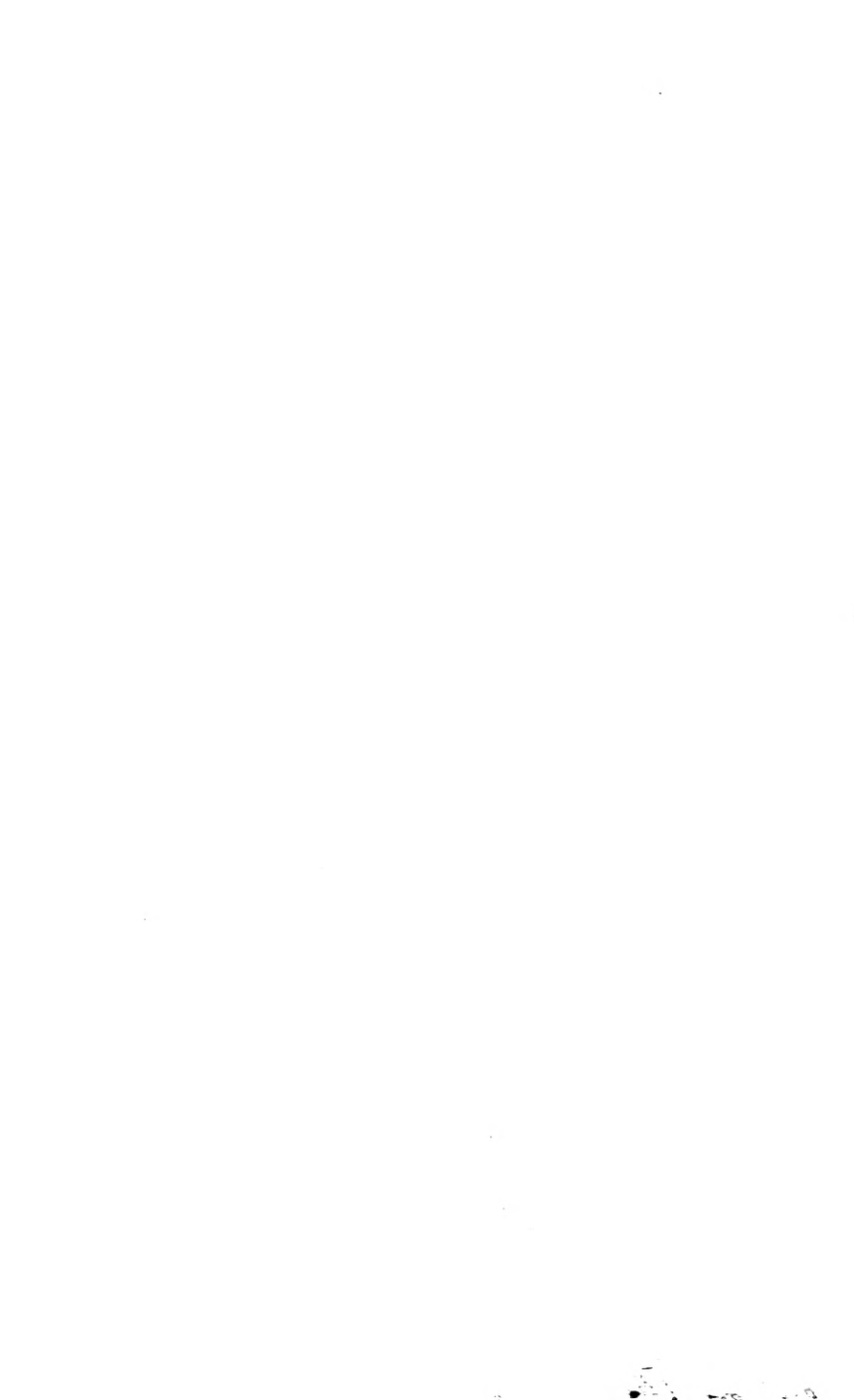




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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

TEMPORARY CHAPEL OF KEBLE COLLEGE.

ON THE

Last Sunday of its use for Divine Worship,

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, 1876.

BY

E. S. TALBOT,

WARDEN.

(Dedicated and presented to the Members of the College.)

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THIS is, dear brethren, not a time at which I should naturally seek an additional opportunity of addressing you. The solemn and affectionate words of such a Lenten course as that which will end to-day lay upon us quite enough responsibility, lest by our neglect or indifference we make them increase our condemnation. My wish would be to warn you of the danger, rather than to add to it. But I ask your attention for a few minutes, because in the opening of our new Chapel we are approaching a great event in our College life, and a new epoch which it is to inaugurate. To such an event the rule, "Do all to the glory of God," must especially apply; and I feel that upon me, as the Head of our Society, falls a clear duty to suggest to you the thoughts with which it should be met. When we assemble next term, it will be on the threshold of S. Mark's Day, and whatever I have to say must be said now. So I speak this morning.

It is not, I hope, too much to assume, that we shall come up with common feelings of happiness at being able to celebrate so great an event in the life of the College which we love; of pleasure at seeing the witness which the gathering will give us of the deep care and interest for the College which is felt in many English homes and hearts; of enthusiasm at the splendour of our new possession; and may I add, of gratitude to God, and to His servant to whom we owe the gift. I hope that we shall not be ashamed to have and to shew such feelings; nor allow the fashion of putting criticism before admiration, to rob us of a natural and honourable enthusiasm: the occasions for it which life brings are not so many that we can afford to waste them.

But, brethren, these natural thoughts will, if unhindered, spring instinctively. What is there beyond which we are more likely to miss, and must be more careful to foster?

Let me express it by again referring to words which I have already quoted. Let us come up, feeling that we are called to bear our part in offering this House "*to the glory of God.*" The giver has done his lavish part. Our turn will have come for ours. I trust that on that day, undistracted by the excitement of large congregations and the sight of famous people and the novelty of the surroundings, we shall upon our knees for the first time in that noble building, send up together an earnest

prayer to Him who never denies the request of His assembled people, asking Him to accept what we do, and to grant that then and in all after-times the Chapel may receive His blessing, and be to His glory.

Let us kneel to pray for this ; but then, according to the maxim "ora et labora," let us stand up to strive for it. And how is it to be attained ? What will make the Chapel to be glorious, and to give glory to God ? For the answer, let me refer you to the second chapter of the prophet Haggai. It was the time when the temple was built again after the return of the captivity. The older men, contrasting its reduced and common structure with the magnificent work of Solomon, of which they could still remember the glory and the fall, wept aloud. And then came the startling paradoxical word of the Lord by Haggai : "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." We know the fulfilment to which those words pointed, and which they received, when He who was "Immanuel," God with men, was received in that same temple by Simeon as the "glory of His people Israel." The Jews had to learn that the true glory of God's temple consisted not in outward splendour of gold, jewels, and stone, but, according to the witness rightly understood of Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple, in that which was enshrined

within the cloud upon the mercy-seat; that it consisted not in that which man offered, however rare, but in that which God gave—His own presence. It was left for our Lord to complete the lesson. Many another might have told his hearers that “neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem” should they “worship the Father.” He alone could proclaim the fulness of the spiritual truth: from other lips it would have sounded cheerless, abstract, negative, the withdrawal of a covenanted privilege, of a long-possessed blessing: He could speak it, because He had brought wherewith to fill the place which He made empty. He who was God with men, whose Manhood was “this temple,” which man would destroy, but Himself would build among men, who could promise that He would be always to the end with his people, so that where two or three were gathered in His name there would He be in the midst of them, who could send down the Spirit of God to make a living temple of the company of the faithful,—He and He alone could announce the end of the special worship on the “holy Hill of Zion” not as a loss, but as a gain, not as a withdrawal, but as a crowning blessing, not as negative and cheerless, but as an intensely positive and stimulating truth. The doctrine that God is a Spirit could be perfectly accepted when it came from the lips of God made man. The purest truth of spiritual worship could be endured when in the light of

that Incarnation it was realized that the spiritual stands in no contrast, but in the most absolute accord with the real and the human. And, brethren, this is the truth handed down to us with the signature of the Church of the Upper Chamber and of the Catacombs, that worship knows no dependence upon outward ceremonial nor local privilege, because the society which offers it is itself the temple in which God dwells, in which He is present Himself to prompt, Himself to offer, Himself to accept the sacrifice of its worship.

Such teaching, so radical, so thorough, so unmistakeable in its spirituality, sets us all, according to the characteristic power of truth, free. So long as it is held and remembered, we are free to take with safety those externals of worship which, without it, for fear of falling into bondage to them, it might be wise to leave. We may use them in such measure as may be suggested either by considerations of expediency, drawn from a study of their effect on human nature; or by indications of their propriety, such as are analogies to them which we find in the natural order of the world, in its beauty and joyousness; or by their correspondence to our own two-fold nature, outward as well as inward, body as well as spirit. So long as we keep our faith in Christ, we are free to offer the very costly ointment of spikenard, without fear lest we should come to think that its price of three hundred pence, or its alabaster box, should be the

reason which gives it any value in His eyes. And if we find that we have been beguiled, all or any of us, into prizing too highly external things, it may indeed be well to discipline ourselves by some abandonment of them; but the real cure lies in the other direction, in seeking a more real and living faith in the spiritual centre of worship. It is only when we are dull to the Divine Presence, that we are in danger of being too much occupied with its shrine.

I love, brethren, to ground Christian practice upon Christian principle. I believe that I do my duty to you best when I assist you in any measure to form the same habit. Therefore I have not thought it wasteful to spend a few minutes in discovering our principles in regard to Christian worship. I wish now, briefly and practically, to apply them to the matter in hand.

First, then, we have learnt to look for the true glory of yonder Chapel in the invisible presence of God and of our Lord. To this let its grandeur and beauty pay their homage and raise our thoughts, and of this continually remind us: let the sight of them, valueless in themselves, but according to our standards and capacities costly and unstinted, remind us of the purpose for which they are there, "to beautify the place of His Sanctuary, to make the place of His feet glorious:" let the series of historical scenes, reaching back into the past and forward into the future, give confidence and

enthusiasm to our faith in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; reminding us that we are only one generation in a royal line, heirs of all God's faithful servants in the past; uttering to us as it were a continual "glory to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." The richness of decoration, increasing as we pass eastward in the Chapel, accompanying the change from Old Testament subjects in the Nave to the exhibition of the New Testament in the Chancel, and culminating at the east around the Altar and in the representation of S. John's vision of our Lord in glory, carry our thoughts onward and upward along with it to the two great mysteries of redemption accomplished, the presence of Christ in heaven and His presence on earth, in heaven the ever-living and victorious figure of the once dead but now ascended Lord, and on earth the covenanted presence which is the counterpart of the cloud and the glory, the centre of our eucharists and of our worship, the most awfully and blessedly sacred gift of Himself to be and dwell among men and in men. Let these thoughts be with us on the morning of S. Mark's Day. Most fitly the first act performed in the new Chapel will be the celebration of the Holy Communion. You will not mistake me, as though I were speaking officially, or as though the idea of any one communicating who did not feel in conscience ready and free to do so were not one

from which I shrink with horror, if I ask all of you who are communicants to do your best to fit yourselves for Communion that day, and to join with us in that "Eucharistia" which is at once a blessing and a thanksgiving, in that solemn invocation of our dear Lord's presence amongst us to accept and sanctify from the very first the worship of our Chapel. And then at every after Eucharist, and, in due kind and degree — according to His promise to those who gather in His Name — at every after Service in the Chapel, let us, helped by its outward beauty, strive to realize the fact of His presence amongst us.

O God! unseen, yet ever near,
 Thy presence may we feel;
 And so, inspired with holy fear,
 Before Thine Altar kneel.

If we fail, brethren, in faith to realize this presence of our Lord amongst us, we miss what would be unspeakably precious, a comfort in sorrow, a refuge in temptation, a terror to sin, a sanctification in happiness, a stimulus to effort, an opportunity for seeking guidance and counsel: His presence would give us "the heart" both "to love and to dread Him." I would add, let our acknowledgment of it find its natural outward expression. I thank you, brethren, for my own part, and may I say for His sake, and for your own, for the general reverence of behaviour in Chapel. Let us maintain it and perfect it. I do not mean to ask individuals to seek new or marked

ways of expressing their reverence: on the contrary, I am grateful to those to whom such expressions would be naturally congenial when I see that they refrain from them. I am sure, as I do not doubt some of you know from experience, that such individual demonstrations of reverence cause difficulties in the way of temptation to self-consciousness to those who practise them; while in the common worship of a society they minister to division and distraction, and so tend to mar the unity which is the first condition of reverence. Therefore I would ask, in the name of a higher and larger good, that even where it is some sacrifice they should be restrained. But upon the other hand, and much more, if there are any who do not kneel, any who are apt to fall into lounging attitudes, to yield too readily to sleep or the like, let them feel that the fixed reverence, if I may so call it, of the building summons them to render a living homage more accordant to it.

And this leads me to what remains to say. You will see that the true doctrine of Christian worship sets before us as it were a two-fold Divine presence in that worship, a presence for us, and a presence in us; I had almost said a presence which we find, and a presence which we bring. We have been dwelling on the first, let us not forget the second—the presence of Christ by the Spirit in the company of faithful people, who are members of His body; in the Church on the large scale, and in each congregation as a miniature of the whole. It is this

presence of Christ in us, this approach to God in one body in Christ, which God acknowledges, and which makes our worship acceptable and prevailing. But this presence must surely be found in us, in proportion as our hearts are prepared to contain it, are severally temples in which He is welcomed with devotion and humility. And so, brethren, it comes to this, that our Services are really beautiful and glorious, acceptable to God, strengthening and kindling to ourselves among ourselves, in proportion as we each do our part in them. Of the inward fitness for this, I will not speak now. As we part to-morrow from this little simple House of God in which we have worshipped, and some of us so often, there is not one of us who thinks seriously at all, but will have some thought of sorrow that he has not made more use of its Services and borne his part in them more devoutly, some wish to do better in the new and greater one. It is to meet such thoughts that I have arranged to celebrate the Holy Communion once more to-morrow here, at which we may best offer to God such acknowledgments of neglect, such resolutions and aspirations for the future.

But, turning from the inward to the outward, what I would ask you to-day, brethren, is, that we should go into the new Chapel prepared all to throw ourselves into making the Services as worthy of it, as hearty full and perfect, as they can be. We are called upon for an effort. I

was struck the other day by a passage in a speech delivered this session by one of our first Statesmen in which he laid it down as a principle, that in every department of life reward took the shape, not of relief, but of promotion to harder and more responsible work. I thought that a grand saying, worthy of an English Statesman, and I saw at once its application to ourselves. I believe we have, on the whole, done well in this Chapel: and now we have our promotion: we are called to harder work: it will take more effort to make a hearty congregational Service which will fill a building like that, than has been needed here. But let us make the effort vigorously and cheerfully. I want our Chapel Services to be a model: I want them to live in the memories of our members who go away, and have to take part in the ordering of Services elsewhere: I want them to quicken any visitor who is present at them with the invigorating sense of contact with a living and outspoken Christian life: I want them to lift ourselves: I want them to be worthy of Him to whom they are offered. And if these are to be so, we must all help. It is for this reason that I so greatly prefer to sacrifice the musical attraction of a choir of boys: it is a sacrifice; but we gain infinitely more than we lose in being made to feel that the excellence of our Services depends on ourselves. Therefore let us all in the first place lend our voices. You

were reminded some time ago in two sermons preached here and afterwards printed, that the special boast and beauty of the Prayer Book of our Reformed Church was its congregational character. A Service outwardly reverent in a building suitably arranged and adorned, and at the same time entirely congregational, is an almost unique peculiarity of England and its Church. How lamentably have we often fallen short in practice of this English ideal! How seldom we enter a Church where the congregation respond as if they were not ashamed of their faith and of their prayers! It is in this that we have a great opportunity of setting a type and example, which may do good far beyond the walls of our own College. Brethren, do not miss it. It was my duty five or six years ago to speak as earnestly as I could to the first members of the College on their responsibility in being the first. I had to tell them that it was far easier to begin well what was new, than later to reform: that what they made the College, *that* it was likely to remain. I believe by God's goodness that the confirmation of experience has been given to my words chiefly, though not wholly, in the favourable form.

And now, brethren, I say the same to *you* about the new Chapel. What you make its Services, that they are likely to remain. What generation of freshmen is to undertake the task of making hearty a Service which you should hand down to them lukewarm or silent? But, brethren,

I am persuaded better things. I must indeed frankly say this much, that I think our responses have grown rather weaker lately; that you lean too much on the Choir; that there are too many mouths shut, too many whose look of indifference must make it harder for others (I find it so myself) to be earnest. [The same thing applies by the way to Grace in Hall: and I should like to take this opportunity of asking you to make it hearty, instead of the half-ashamed mutter which it now often is.] But as I have said once already, on the whole our Services are good. Let us make them better in the new Chapel. In such ways as these. Let us all join in the responses with a clear voice. Let us make a point of joining in the musical parts according to our powers, and not according to our fancy: not singing music which we like, and leaving what we dislike unsung. We are careful to provide books for all, Prayer Books, Bibles, and Hymn-books; I should like to see a general habit among us of following the Lessons in the Bible. Those who act as Readers of the Lessons should do honour to this subordinate but important part in the conduct of the Service by reading them to the utmost of their power audibly, intelligently, and with reverence of voice and manner. Our Choir should be as full and good as possible; and to those who have the qualifications I would suggest that they should join it, even at a slight sacrifice of time, or of taste if the music is not the kind they care most for singing,

or of variety if they are asked to take a part other than that which they would choose. I shall venture even to mention a very trifling matter, a mere detail of order: I should be glad to get rid of the disorderly way which we have on Wednesday and Friday mornings, when some stand some sit in the pause between the Psalms and the Hymn: I would ask all to continue standing. I purposely refer to a small point of this kind, to shew you that the temper which I should wish each to have is impatience with any thing depending upon himself to remedy which forms the least blemish on the order and perfection of our Service.

But while I speak of externals, do not suppose that my thoughts stop there, that I forget, or that I wish to disguise from you that outward negligence and silence may have a deeper cause. I would rather hope that the consideration which, speaking at my last opportunity this Term, I ask you to give during the Vacation to what I have said, may lead some to ask themselves more plainly and distinctly the reason why they hold back from a hearty share in public worship. Maybe the enquiry will discover to some an inward indifference or rebellion towards that which is expressed by the words which a Service of Christian worship puts into their mouths; and they will find that their silence was an instinctive shrinking from the further sin of hypocrisy; that half unconsciously,

their conscience kept them from a lie. If so, the reform must begin deeper. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. No work could be more appropriate to the remainder of this holy season. But if the reform has been begun within, our best care for externals will be all help, and no hurt. Of all secondary helps, the sound of each other's hearty voices, the sight of each other's reverent bearing, the sense of a common impulse of devotion stirring in confession and prayer and praise, will do incalculably much to warm our coldness, to rouse our listlessness, to refresh our weariness, to cheer our discouragements, to lift us again and again to the effort after a devouter spirit, to confirm our faith. "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the House of the Lord."





