JOHN KEBLE:
POET AND CRITIC

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JOHN KEBLE: POET AND CRITIC

BY

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I have examined the literary career of the The Rev. John Keble (1792 - 1866) so as to demonstrate that his role in the development of English critical theory has been seriously underrated. His neglect, I contend, is due to several factors, not the least of which was the temperament and religious convictions of the man himself. I also have presented evidence to show that the initial and enduring popular appeal of his first volume of poetry, **The Christian Year**, overshadowed his later scholarship, which consequently went largely unnoticed. His literary contribution was presented in a series of lectures given during the ten years that he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford University; and in a series of articles and reviews in learned journals. Not only were his ideas perceptive and illuminating, but they also helped to some extent to determine the direction that English critical theory was to follow during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

My method of presentation is to begin with an evaluation of John Keble as a pastor and as a leader of the Oxford Movement within the Church of England. I show that each of these roles had a distinctive bearing both on his own poetry and on his beliefs about poetry in general. In doing this, I found it useful to examine the concept Keble

referred to as the **Doctrine of Reserve**.

I then analyse Keble's poetry with a special emphasis on **The Christian Year** (1827) and **The Lyra Innocentium** (1846). This is followed by an appraisal of the forty lectures given at Oxford between 1832 and 1842, and later published under the title of **The Praelectiones Acadamicae** (1844). Some passages in the **Occasional Papers and Reviews**, which support and enhance the main themes of the lectures, are also presented and evaluated.

Finally, I suggest why the fame of John Keble, who made such a distinctive and important contribution to English literature, so rapidly passed into obscurity.

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PREFACE

On July 14, 1983, a group of Anglicans from various parts of the world met at Oxford to offer thanksgiving on the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of an event that supposedly gave rise to The Oxford Movement. Many who came to share in the Solemn High Masses, the Processions of the Blessed Sacrament, and the frequent recitations of the Holy Rosary, gathered at the university with a sort of vague understanding that it was to this 'Oxford Movement' that they owed the restoration of such services which for so many years had been neglected by the Anglican branch of the Catholic Church of Christ. Clouds of incense, sputtering candles, clanging bells, elaborate vestments, and the rich cadences of Gregorian Chant provided an element of medievalism that was readily labelled as timeless Catholic Ritual.

The messages proclaimed that day, and for many weeks thereafter, were in tribute to the courage and godliness of the Reverend John Keble. This was the man, declared the preachers especially chosen for the occasion, who restored catholicity to the Anglican Faith. When he preached that famous Azzize Sermon at Oxford in 1833, they declared, he

issued a challenge that was to launch a movement that subsequently affected the very soul of Anglicanism wherever it had spread throughout the world. And blessed, concluded the preachers, are those Provinces within the church that have enshrined this special day within their calendars in tribute to so major a churchman![1]

Yet, by all accounts, the Reverend John Keble himself would have been amazed, bewildered, and annoyed by such a display of inaccurate rhetoric and gaudy pomp and ceremony. His natural shyness and intense desire to divert attention from himself, would serve as the basis for his categorical denial that he ever laid the foundation for, or raised the curtain to, that renewal within the Church of England now known as the Oxford Movement. Furthermore, he would vehemently deny any similarity whatever between the products of that Movement (i.e. ritualism and the 'copy Rome' syndrome) and the intentions and aspirations of its founders.

John Keble considered himself primarily a Pastor in the mould outlined by George Herbert in **A Priest to the Temple** (1652). Forsaking what had been an outstanding academic career, Keble spent the greater part of his life as Vicar of the tiny village of Hursley, near Winchester, only occasionally going to Oxford to fulfill teaching commitments. In his own lifetime he was heralded as a great poet, with his **Christian Year** enjoying great popular success. He wrote with such confidence and conviction on major as well

as minor theological controversies of his time that he was venerated by the other leaders of the Movement such as Edward Pusey, Hurrell Froude, Isaac Williams and John Henry Newman.

Apart from being erroneously remembered by devotees as the man who started the Oxford Movement (a title originally conferred by Newman[2]) and by having a college erected in his name at Oxford, John Keble has now largely been forgotten in both the ecclesiastical and academic worlds. So many and colourful were the leaders of the Movement that even a man of Keble's calibre does not appear to be singularly outstanding; while in the literary sphere his fame seems to have departed with the decline in popularity of **The Christian Year** in the early part of the present century. It is a striking fact that the immense popularity of this volume during the writer's lifetime overshadowed his other accomplishments, and consequently has led to his relative obscurity today.

Keble's poetry has been unable to withstand the test of time. His fame as a Professor of Poetry at Oxford would have survived had it not been for a combination of circumstances which will be explored in later chapters of this work. My main thesis is that because attention was diverted to Keble's relatively minor accomplishments, his main achievement, the **Praelectiones Academicae**, was largely ignored, and he, as a result, has become a far less important literary figure than he deserves to be.

NOTES

[1] "Celebrations at Oxford," The Church Times 18 July 1983: 1.

[2] John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (Oxford: Longmans, 1873) p.40.

CHAPTER I

PASTOR AND POET

John Keble was born at Fairford in Gloucestershire on St. Mark's Day 1792, the second of the five children of the Reverend Thomas Keble and his wife Sarah Maule. Receiving all of his early education from his father, he attained a scholarship to Corpus Christi, Oxford, in June 1806. In 1810 he achieved a Double First Class - a feat which had been accomplished just once previously by Sir Robert Peel. In 1811 he was elected a Fellow of Oriel at the age of just nineteen, and won the University Prizes for English and Latin Essays in that same year. He was made a Deacon on Trinity Sunday in 1815, and elevated to the Priesthood in the following year by the Bishop of Oxford. In 1823 he moved from the University setting to assist his ailing father in his parish at Fairford. It was here, in 1827, and largely at his father's request, that he submitted **The Christian Year** for publication. The year 1828 saw his election to the Provostship of Oriel; his edition of **Hooker's Works** was completed in 1830; and in 1831 he was elected to the Chair of Poetry at the University of Oxford.

An outstanding record such as this leaves little doubt of the promising career that could have been John Keble's

had he chosen to remain within the University setting. Such was not to be the case. Throughout his life there seems to have been a constant conflict between his love of learning and his desire for the obscure life of a country parson ministering to simple folk. Ultimately the latter was to prevail but the conflict seems always to have been present so that one cannot help but speculate as to how history might have been altered had Keble devoted his energies to the pursuit of a literary career.

There is little disagreement over the events in Keble's career, or indeed of their significance, in the two major biographies written within fifty years of his death.[1] Later scholars such as Geoffrey Faber[2] attempted to delve into the psychological makeup of his personality, but even writers of this school have reached the same conclusion as had his intimate friends. By all accounts John Keble was a devout, unassuming, retiring, even self-effacing, 'man of God'. His duties as a pastor were performed meticulously and faithfully over a ministry of nearly half a century, thirty-two years of which were spent in the obscure little parish of Hursley, near Winchester. He is known frequently to have diverted attention from himself, even to deliberately preaching poor sermons when he suspected that his personal popularity was receiving more attention than was his message.[3] Many stories are recorded of his devotion to the needs of the sick and of his efforts to prepare the children of the parish for Confirmation, often going to

their homes when they returned from work. His trips outside the boundaries of his parish were few, and, on such scattered occasions, he stayed away for just long enough to accomplish his business. John Keble seems to have attempted to mould his life and ministry as closely to the standards set by George Herbert in **A Priest to the Temple** (1652) as was possible.

Such an existence would have constituted a life of obscurity for Keble if there had not been at least three important factors at work: his reputation as a scholar, his popularity as a poet, and most important, his role in the Oxford Movement. Before investigating the significance of these, and the way in which each affected the progress of the others, it is necessary to account for yet another quality that was present in the priest, the poet and the professor, and which played a predominant role in almost all of the activities of John Keble.

His biographers usually refer to this quality as **The Doctrine of the Reserve**. It is important not to confuse this with a theological concept of the same title which was popular in Keble's time and became the subject of one of the **Tracts for the Times.**[4] While both theories have much in common, and seem to stem from the same source, in Keble's case a deliberate degree of 'reserve' was applied to every aspect of his life, and not just to his interpretation of sacred literature.

The atmosphere surrounding the life and worship of the

Church of England during the eighteenth century helps one to understand Keble's all encomposing concept of this doctrine in his own life. The term 'high-church' during this era had a much different meaning than it was to acquire soon after and retain to the present day. Unlike the present day emphasis on ritual and ceremony automatically now associated with this term, the church in which Keble grew up was one of austerity and restraint. Services were long with much attention given to scripture reading and preaching, but little, if any, to emotional expression in the form of hymns or other congregational participation. Not only was this church conservative in its theology, but so were most of its adherents in their politics. Charles I was revered as a martyr for the faith, and the relationship between church and state was considered to be sacrosanct.

Thus, in his parish at Hursley Keble encouraged and practised the veneration of the Book of Common Prayer and the preaching of word and sacrament. The 'enthusiasm' of the evangelical and the colourful ritual of the Romanist were both avoided. It was considered vulgar to parade sacred truths before the unprepared or uninitiated, and just as indelicate to portray one's personal feelings. The typical reserve of the English gentleman was supposed to be as much a part of his heritage in his national church as it was in his secular culture.

Nor did the adherents of this doctrine profess to be practising something new. They claimed that it could be

traced to the ancient **'disciplina arcani'**, a practice which some patristic scholars believe may have been followed in the early Christian church. This rule insisted that new members should be exposed only to such parts of the sacred mysteries as they were capable of understanding. Founded on the words of Christ, " I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now "[5], and the Pauline injunction to 'feed with milk and not with meat'[6], an explanation of the inner mysteries of the faith was withheld until the learner reached various stages of development. This practice included the drastic step of excluding even those being prepared for baptism from observing the integral parts of the liturgy. With John Keble, this attitude of restraint and caution was much more than an academic or theological theory; for him it was a way of life.

It doubtless appears strange that Keble, who claimed to be so moved by the poetry of Wordsworth, and who was obviously very familiar with the writings of the other Romantics of his day, could still say with conviction, 'I hold it to be a selfish and dangerous sort of thing for people to be always turning their eyes inward'.[7] Yet an examination of **The Christian Year** and **The Lyra Innocentium** shows that such was the case. As a result, the truths which Keble sets forth in these volumes are little more than biblical truths reinforced by the splendor of nature and the grandeur of the world. Individuals are not mentioned and very rarely is the first person singular used at all.

Instead, words such as 'us', 'thy servants', 'the lowly soul', which are all indicative of his own relationship to God, always replace the expected 'I', or 'me', or 'mine'.

That his poetry contained a very personal element is indicative of the poetic ability and spiritual insight of John Keble. That such a philosophy would bring him into conflict with the Romantics is obvious. What should be equally obvious is the difficulty this was going to create when he attempted, in his lectures, to combine this desire for restraint with his concept of the need for poetry to provide a means for the poet to release his innermost feelings through his work.

Before investigating either the lectures or the poetry though, it is necessary to examine the element that kept drawing the reluctant, retiring Keble into the center of publicity and controversy, The Oxford Movement.

NOTES

[1] John T. Coleridge, A Memoir of the Rev. John Keble, M.A. (Oxford: James Parker, 1868), and, Walter Lock, The Life of John Keble (London: Methuen, 1892).

[2] Geoffrey Faber, Oxford Apostles: A Character Study of the Oxford Movement (London: Faber and Faber, 1933).

[3] See Appendix B - A letter written by John H. Newman in compliance to the request of E.B. Pusey for a literary assessment of Keble's work. While declining to do this, Newman provides an illuminating character sketch of his former collegue.

[4] Isaac Williams, Tract 87, Tracts for the Times (1840)

[5] John 16:12

[6] I Corinthians 3:2

[7] Locke, p. 132.

CHAPTER II

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

When attempting to define the origins of the Oxford Movement, it is unwise, if not dangerous, to accept John Henry Newman's bland statement that " I have ever regarded this date (July 14, 1832, when John Keble preached his famous Assize Sermon) as the start of the Movement "[1], as anything more than a product of his own sense of drama and sensationalism. In fact, the Movement can be traced back at least as early as the seventeenth century to such Divines as Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637), and George Herbert (1593-1633) - men who never considered the break with Rome as in any way changing the traditions and catholicity of the English church. Their sentiments and sense of spirituality were kept alive, sometimes barely, throughout the subsequent protestant movements emanating from Scotland and the continent. Thus, while the traditional sentiments survived, they by no means flourished. As a result, by the start of the nineteenth century the Church of England needed to be restored to what it once was thought to be; or to be directed to what it should become.

The first move in this direction came from an unexpected source. John Wesley, together with his brother Charles, made a decided impact on church life though their appeal to the emotions and their stress on the salvation of the individual soul. Yet, their success in evangelism was often attained by ignoring the traditional liturgy and discipline of the church. Known as 'The Methodists', this group of evangelically-minded churchmen stressed the need for personal conversion and individual commitment. The use of the hymn became one of their main means of reaching people who had been indifferent to the traditional 'dryness' of the established church. Although their original emphasis was highly sacramental, their orthodox teaching was soon replaced with doctrines not unlike those propounded by the Puritans a century earlier, wherein little attention was paid to the Order of bishops and even less to the need for an episcopally-ordained priesthood. The success rate in attracting converts, most of whom had been disillusioned or indifferent Anglicans, was high, so that the evangelical movement progressed with fervor, often becoming identified with the struggle to correct many of the social ills of the day. While this movement succeeded in stimulating a new and lively spirit within the Church of England, it was not able to influence the 'establishment', with the result that the more fervent adherents to its principles became part of an entirely new church.

The second movement, partly in reaction to the first, came less than a century later at Oxford. While the leaders of both the Evangelical Revival and the Oxford Movement had the same desire, namely to restore life and vigor to a tired and anemic church, in both their theology and methodology their similarities quickly ceased. In fact, the distrust and contempt that many evangelicals had for the Church of Rome, which they identified with the biblical 'Whore of Babylon', was at times superseded by their fear and hatred of those members of their own church who sought to emulate her.

Another problem in defining a movement which was initiated by more than one leader arises when it becomes obvious that while the leaders agree in generalities, they often vigorously disagree over particulars. This was especially evident in the Oxford Revival when Keble the pastor, Pusey the scholar, Froude the aesthete, and Newman the charismatic visionary, spoke on similiar issues. From the earliest days of the movement, it was quite clear that while they had common concerns they did not have common methods of dealing with them. Even Froude's death in the early days of the Movement did not prevent him from extending his divisive influence when the publication of his **Remains**[2] made many moderate supporters suspicious of a pro-Roman Catholic plot. This fear was greatly increased with Newman's actual defection to the Church of Rome in 1845, confirming what many suspicious churchmen had predicted would happen.

Just as the Wesleys attempted to attract their followers through emotionally-charged hymns, so the leaders of the Oxford Movement sought to gain adherents through the printed message. A series of publications ranging from brief leaflets to long theological treatises, known as **Tracts for the Times**, began appearing in 1833 and subsequently gave the Movement one of the names by which it was later known. **The Tracts**, which were very popularly received, gave the movement the attention that the earlier leaders such as H. Froude and Newman sought. Yet, the pro-Roman Catholic tendencies of some of the writings (and of Newman and his closest followers) led many to regard the whole Movement with distrust and even hostility. That Keble and Pusey were ardent adherents to the Church of England did little to restrain the hysteria created by Newman's eventual defection, and by the activities of the ritualists who were adding an element to the Movement that was never part of the plan of its founders.

It was this emphasis on the introduction of colourful medieaval ceremonies and apparel, as well as a revival of interest in Gothic architecture, that ultimately became the rallying cry of the second-generation members of the Oxford Movement. To many people these external displays comprise the only aspect of the Oxford Movement that is still remembered.

In addition it is important to note that the the Oxford Movement overlaps that era now labelled as the Romantic

Movement. Wordsworth was admired and respected by Keble; Coleridge was also known to him through his work and through his nephew, J.T. Coleridge, Keble's closest friend and subsequent biographer. Pusey was fascinated with reading the works of Lord Byron - a practice of which he often felt ashamed.[3] Meanwhile, Sir Walter Scott had a profound effect on all of the leaders of the Movement, but especially was this felt by Newman[4]. As a result, Keble's critical review of Lockhart's **Life of Sir Walter Scott** in **The British Critic**, as I shall show in Chapter VI, contains some of his most profound and significant views on the nature of poetry.

Superficially it might appear that the Oxford Movement was yet another manifestation of Romanticism in ecclesiastical garb. Since the leaders of the Movement were the products of the same culture, environment, and educational systems, and were practically of the same age as almost all of the leading Romantics, they were to some extent performing under similar influences. In some instances this may have been true, but it is far from being the general rule. With the exception of Newman, the other notable leaders of the Oxford Movement wrote as if they were unaffected by even the most obvious aspects of Romanticism. John Keble, I contend, even went so far as to defy them.

NOTES

[1] John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (London: Longmans, 1873). p. 40.

[2] Richard Hurrell Froude, Remains of the late Reverend Richard Hurrell Froude (London: Rivington, 1838). Most historians of the Oxford Movement now consider the decision of Newman and Keble to publish this work as one of their major tactical errors.

[3] Geoffrey Faber, Oxford Apostles (London: Faber and Faber, 1933). p. 134.

[4] Aubrey de Vere, Recollections (London: n.p., 1894) p. 270.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

THE BACKGROUND

Thomas Hardy in **Jude the Obscure** describes Miss Fontover as a person who 'wore a cross and beads round her neck as her only ornament, and knew **The Christian Year** by heart'.[1] Of Maggie Tulliver, George Eliot states, 'She read so eagerly and constantly in her three books, - The Bible, Thomas a Kempis, and **The Christian Year** (no longer rejected as a hymn book), that they filled her mind with a continual stream of rhythmic memories'.[2] M. Marc and A.C. Percival in **Victorian Best-Seller** show that all of Charlotte M. Yonge's major characters had read **The Christian Year.**[3]

Not only had this modest volume so infiltrated contemporary fiction, but also scholars and reviewers were often quite extravagant in its praise; for example, Bishop Westcott is said to have claimed, 'a verse of Keble's is worth volumes of Tennyson'.[4] Somewhat more restrained was J.C. Shairp's statement that the Oxford Movement bequeathed 'two permanent monuments of genius to the Church of England, Newman's sermons and Keble's **Christian Year**'.[5]

The Christian Year was first published in 1827, although some of its contents had been circulating in

manuscript among Keble's friends as early as 1819. Much of the poetry was inspired by the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer for a particular Sunday or Holy Day. A few poems were written to commemorate personal happenings (eg. the death of his mother), yet when compiled were found to fit very conveniently into the theme being expressed; on the other hand a comparatively small number appear to have been composed deliberately in order to 'fill the gaps' so that their stilted phrases are easily recognized when compared to the smooth flow of the spontaneous works.

John Keble, true to his own theory of poetry as will be observed in the next chapter, composed his verse primarily as a means of release for his own pent-up emotions, rather than for the pleasure of a reader. Nowhere is his much belaboured concept of the 'Doctrine of Reserve' more obvious than in the poetry he wrote. That he had to be persuaded by his father and others to publish these private recollections indicates how strongly he felt about this doctrine.[6] Predicting that the volume would be 'still born', he was acutely embarrassed by its success, refused to discuss it, and contributed most of the profits derived from its sales to the building of his new church at Hursley.[7]

In her biography of Wordsworth, Mary Moorman claims that the birth of **The Christian Year** was not quite so casual and effortless as Keble often suggested. Wordsworth, in his poem **The Liturgy**, wrote a stanza that seems to imply that poetry could not be expected to capture the glory and

splendor of religious truth:

> Upon that circle traced from sacred story
> We only dare to cast a transient glance
> Trusting in hope that others may advance
> With mind intent upon the King of Glory
> From his mild advent till his countenance
> Shall dissipate the seas and mountains hoary.[8]

Moorman contends that Keble took these lines as a challenge, rather than a warning: 'the answer to this challenge came in 1827 in the publication of Keble's **Christian Year**, which for the next half century was unrivalled as a book of devotion in Anglican households'.[9]

This theory that Keble was deliberately writing religious verse to show Wordsworth that it was possible to cast more than a 'transient glance' on sacred things seems highly unlikely. Accepting such a challenge from one he venerated is so out of keeping with his character and life style that I am more inclined to agree with Brian Martin who claims it is far more likely that Keble took these lines as a warning of the danger involved in writing religious poetry.[10] Thus he delayed publication until 1827, and then proceeded only with reluctance because of the strong wishes of his ailing father.

The structure for **The Christian Year** is quite straight forward and simple to follow. Using the liturgical calendar of Advent to the last Sunday in Trinity, Keble extrapolates

a line of scripture from either the epistle or gospel for the day and uses it as an epigraph for the poem that follows. In addition to the fifty-two Sundays Keble also includes poems for the eighteen 'red letter' saints of the Church of England calendar (i.e. those mentioned in scripture), six of the seven sacraments (he pointedly omits any reference to Penance), the Occasional Offices of the Church, and true to his traditional Tory background, verses for King Charles the Martyr, the Restoration of the Royal Family, and the Accession.

A glance at the table of contents, as well as a reading of the poems, will demonstrate that far too much emphasis has been placed on the role of **The Christian Year** in the events of the Oxford Movement. Inasmuch as it draws attention to the liturgical calendar and meditates upon the events contained therein, it does succeed in emphasizing the Tractarian claim of an unbroken relationship with the past and of the Catholic heritage of the Church of England. But further than this, Keble does not go. The sacrament for which there is no poem, Confession and Absolution, was the one that the Tractarians of the time were loudly condemning the Church for neglecting. Yet the revival of this custom in isolated parishes led to more bitter dispute and controversy than did many other more profound issues. As Christina Rossetti was to comment just a generation later, this practice was one of the identifying marks of the true Anglo-Catholic.[11] While Keble's 'soothing' Prayer Book

makes provision for it,[12] he deliberately leaves it out. The avoiding of such a controversial subject is one of the reasons why this 'high church' book had such success across denominational and party lines.

Even more serious though for his fellow leaders in the Oxford Movement, who were stressing the contentious Doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, was the decidedly 'anti-presence' overtone in the poem commemorating the **Gunpowder Treason** :

> O come to our Communion Feast:
> There present in the heart,
> **Not** in the hands, the eternal Priest
> Will his true self impart.

This was certainly not in line with the Tracts, or the sentiments of Froude, Pusey or Newman. To them such a stanza was heresy and a betrayal of the cause from within. Nor could Keble be persuaded to change the offending sentence until, rather listlessly on his death bed, he gave Pusey the consent he had so long sought to replace the **Not** in line three with an **As**. Thus unity regarding the Tractarian Doctrine of the Real Presence was restored; but it was accomplished at the expense of making nonsense of the stanza since the fourth line now contradicts the third.

The theology contained in **The Christian Year** is not markedly Anglo-Catholic. Rather it is indisputably that of the 'via media' of the Church of England as proclaimed by

the seventeenth-century Divines. As a result, it is in line with the Anglican tradition of being opposed to Rome on the one hand and to the Dissenters on the other. John Henry Newman was being less than accurate when he credited Keble's poetry with laying the foundation for the subsequent revival.[13] Yet this erroneous credit has survived in contemporary accounts of the Oxford Movement, long after the poetry itself has virtually perished.

Pusey attributed the writing of the book to yet another motive: '[Keble] published **The Christian Year** while Newman was just emerging from Evangelicalism and I was busy with Arabic, in the hope of counter-working, with God's help, German rationalism on the Old Testament'.[14] This is reading a motive into the work that it does not contain. Nowhere in his writings does Keble give any indication of this and the poems themselves, while expressing a fundamental belief in the scriptures, are far from being apologetic by nature. J.C. Shairp is correct, therefore, to ascribe the success of **The Christian Year** to four main qualities: (1) Its tone of religious feeling - fresh, deep and tender, (2) intensity and tenderness of home affection, (3) a shy and delicate reserve, and (4) a pure love of nature.[15]

The religious motif has rightly been placed first, since primarily this is a book of devotional reading. Although the diction is far from being 'rustic', Keble has succeeded in transposing sentiment that heretofore had been expressed in an ancient dialect with obvious Hebraic

overtones, to one more in keeping with the everyday language of his readers. His precise and detailed knowledge of scripture (a knowledge that is sometimes lost on the casual reader) is combined with a new element that took on prominence in the Movement. That element was a devout emphasis, not on the judgmental God of the Old Testament, but on Jesus, the Friend and Brother of the Gospels. This choice of terms of such personal intimacy is one category where the Tractarians most resemble their contemporaries - the Romantics.

To this religious element is closely linked Keble's strong feeling for home and fireside; a feeling that was true to his own life style and one which generated memories (imagined or otherwise) of the security, peace and contentment of his boyhood. The most obvious examples are: 'Since all that is not Heaven must fade' (**Whitsun Monday**); 'When brothers part for manhood's race' (**St. Andrew**); and, 'I cannot point to memories eye' (**Advent IV**).

Keble's natural reserve, which as the **Doctrine of Reserve** that was to become such an integral part of his poetic theory (Chapter V), is quite obvious in **The Christian Year**. J.C. Shairp defines this sentiment as 'that fine reserve which does not publish aloud, but only delicately hints to deeper feelings:

To love the sober shade
More than the laughing light

And,

E'en human love will shrink from sight'.[16]

KEBLE AND WORDSWORTH

Critics have long cited the influence of Wordsworth in Keble's love of nature motif, although I suspect that this has been somewhat exaggerated. It is true that there are times when the Wordsworthian influence is obvious, as in such lines as :

'How quiet shows the woodland scene' (**All Saints**)

and

'Deep in the silence as of summer noon' (**Easter V**).

It is wrong to attribute these similarities simply to the effect that Wordsworth is supposed to have had on Keble. It is even a greater blunder to attribute (as some have done)[17] great significance to the influence Keble may have had upon Wordsworth's later poetry.

It has already been suggested how very much Keble respected Wordsworth, both as a poet and as a person; and nowhere is this regard better demonstrated than in his dedication to the **Praelectiones.**[18] It is not so clear, however, just how Wordsworth felt about **The Christian Year** and its composer. When mention is made of these poems in Wordsworth's correspondence, the reader gets the impression that Keble is looked upon in a rather patronizing manner. Wordsworth likes the sentiments that Keble is expressing

through his poetry, but he has difficulty in being complimentary to the poetry itself.[19] Keble himself, shortly before his death, revealed that Wordsworth had once told him that he would like to sit down with him and revise the grammar in **The Christian Year**![20]

It must be remembered that although occasional correspondence occurred between these two poets, their relationship was by no means intimate. It would appear that when it came to poetry, their fundamental differences over diction (Chapter VI) was a major stumbling block to Wordsworth's appreciation of Keble's work. Writing to his nephew, Christopher, in 1836, Wordsworth said that he had analyzed Keble's 'verses on Baptism', and while approving the style he noted '... how vicious it was in diction, though the thoughts and feelings were quite suitable for the occasion. Keble has been seduced into many faults by his immoderate admiration of the ancient classics'.[21]

This is consistent with another statement attributed to Wordsworth: '[**The Christian Year**] is very good; so good that if it were mine, I would write it all over again.'[22] Henry Crabbe Robinson also wrote that he 'heard Wordsworth speak slightingly of the mechanical talents of Keble, but he esteemed the tendency of his poems'[23]. That Wordsworth found fault with the structure of Keble's poetry, and especially with the diction, is understandable. **The Christian Year** has little evidence of 'a selection of language really used by men'[24] that Wordsworth considered to be essential to good

poetry. In fact, Keble often deliberately uses a selection of vocabularly **not** generally 'used by men' and in some ways his recourse to unfamiliar, and at times archaic words, can be seen as yet another method of preserving a proper amount of the reserve, modesty, and intimacy that he believed true poetry required.

OTHER INFLUENCES

Nor is Wordsworth the only 'master' who may have influenced **The Christian Year.** Scholars such as Brian Martin see influences drawn from Spenser's Red Crosse Knighte (**Tuesday in Whitsuntide**), Milton (**Advent**), Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' (**Morning**), from Blake's concept of childhood innocence (**Epiphany II**), and Keats' poem 'Fancy' with the several references to that word (**Advent III, Good Friday, and Trinity II**). In fact, Martin is able to detect further evidence of Keats's influence in the description of the cold in 'St. Agnes Eve' (**Christmas Day**), and in Keble's illusion to 'the bleak hill-side' (**Epiphany III**) with a similar reference in 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'[25].

The format of **The Christian Year** has also been associated with that little known work of the seventeenth century entitled **The Holy Calendar**, whose full title reads:

The Holy Calendar
Being
A Treble Series of Epigrams
Upon All the Feasts Observed
by the
Church of England
composed by
Nathanael Eaton, Doctor of Philosophy and Medicine
and Vicar of Bishop's Gate
in the County of Salop
1661

Although Eaton uses three selections for each 'Feast', while Keble uses only one, there are many similarities between the two works. While Keble makes no mention of the earlier work, James Tasker, the publisher of the 1888 edition of **The Holy Calendar**, perhaps encouraged by the popular success of **The Christian Year**, suggests that Keble owed his inspiration to Eaton.

R.S. Rowntree, writing towards the close of the nineteenth century, made an interesting, if inaccurate, observation:

> Examination papers of the future would ask candidates to name ten of the foremost British Authors who flourished in the 19th. century and the Works for which they are famed. All present indications point to **The Christian Year** as one of the few books written in the 19th. century that may be widely read in the 20th. century, and that John Keble will be one of the authors named by those who obtain the highest number of marks for their answer to our hypothetical question.[26]

It is easy to see why Rowntree could have made such an enthusiastic observation. During his era **The Christian Year** was going through a series of printings unprecedented by any other book of poems,[26] and its reception was enthusiastic at all levels of society. That the enormous popular appeal for this book would dwindle was inevitable. Tastes in poetry, and especially in religious poetry, frequently change dramatically from one age to another. Yet even its critics might have found it difficult to believe that in less than a century **The Christian Year** would become almost obsolete. Since 1914 there has been only one new edition of this work. Even then, it was a special project, undertaken in 1977 at the request of the Society of St. Peter and St. Paul to prepare for an anniversary of the Oxford Movement. Ten years later many copies from this edition still remain unsold and it seems unlikely that there will be another attempt very soon to revive interest in a book which such a short time ago inspired and delighted so many readers.

NOTES

[1] Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (London: Macmillan, 1951). p.110.

[2] George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss (London: Everyman, 1969). p. 274.

[3] M. Marc and A.C. Percival Victorian Best-Seller (London: Harrap, 1947).

[4] Brian Martin, John Keble (London: Croom Helm, 1976) p. 111.

[5] Martin p. 111.

[6] Martin p. 110.

[7] Georgina Battiscombe, John Keble: A Study in Limitations (London: Constable, 1963). p. 104.

[8] William Wordsworth, The Liturgy (Ecclesiastical Sonnets, No. XIX).

[9] Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965). Vol II, p. 394.

[10] Martin p. 75.

[11] Georgina Battiscombe, Christina Rossetti (London: Longmans, 1965). p. 27.

[12] Book of Common Prayer (1662) Exhortation in Service of Holy Communion. Here the penitent sinner is encouraged to come to the Priest for absolution and spiritual advice.

[13] John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (London: Longmans, 1873). p. 21.

[14] H.P. Liddon, Life of Pusey (London: Longmans, 1894) Vol.IV, p.340.

[15] J.C. Shairp, John Keble: An Essay (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1866). p. 80.

[16] Shairp p. 98.

[17] Martin p. 74.

[18] See Appendix E.

[19] Martin p. 74.

[20] E.B. Pusey (ed.) Keble's Occasional Papers and Reviews (Oxford: James Parker, 1877). p. viii.

[21] Moorman, Vol. II p. 480.

[22] Martin p. 73.

[23] Martin p. 74.

[24] William Wordsworth, Preface to 2nd. Edition of **Lyrical Ballads** (1800).

[25] In spite of this, Keble's personal library, now preserved at Keble College, Oxford, does not contain a single copy of Keats's works. No doubt some of Martin's surmising is accurate, but often the similarities he notes are only to the degree that any writer is a composite of all the other writers he has read, as well as of his own distinctive genius and experience.

[26] J.S. Rowntree, 'Notes on the Christian Year', **Friends Quarterly Examiner**, (Bodleian Library, 1927).

[27] See Appendix A

IV

OTHER POEMS AND HYMNS

1. **Lyra Innocentium**

> O dearest, dearest boy, my heart
> For better love would seldom yearn
> Could I but teach the hundredth part
> Of what from thee I learn.
> - Wordsworth, **Anecdote For Fathers**, ll. 57 - 60

It is significant that John Keble chose the above lines from Wordsworth as the epigraph for his second major book of poetry. Published anonymously in 1846, **The Lyra Innocentium** is an attempt to view the world from a perspective of a childlike innocence similar to that so readily portrayed by William Blake in his **Songs of Innocence**. It is surprising that the qualities of childlike innocence which seemed so much a part of the character of John Keble are not reflected in this volume. Perhaps for this reason **The Lyra Innocentium** never seemed to gain popular acceptance in the way that had its predecessor, **The Christian Year**. Yet Newman, in his celebrated letter prefacing **Occasional Papers and Reviews**, claims that as poetry **The Lyra Innocentium** supersedes anything else that Keble had written.[2] This is true, but what Newman fails to say is that interspersed with

this very fine poetry are many dreadful poems which show the poet at his worst. This appears to have been recognized by the public, for in contrast to the publishing history of **The Christian Year**, **The Lyra Innocentium** was very poorly received.[3]

There are several reasons why this second volume of poetry did not gain popular approval. The first, and most obvious, is the common difficulty of simply following one unexpected best seller with a second. To do this is a challenge and a fear experienced by many artists who have had initial success. Also, Keble's situation had changed dramatically in the time between the two publications. No longer was he the relatively unknown country parson of Hursley who could capture the public imagination with his lyrics of nature and the joys of the rural life. John Keble was now one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, and as such was involved in most of the bitter ecclesiastical controversies of the day. Involvement in such activities undoubtedly coloured the public conception of him, especially amongst those who were hostile to the Movement. At the same time, public controversey, which was so repellent to his very nature, may well have weakened his own poetic ability.

Second, **The Lyra Innocentium** is much more of a policy manual for the Tractarians than was its predecessor. While it could not be considered a 'Manifesto', yet it contained sufficient Anglo-Catholic propaganda to make it

objectionable to groups who previously had no difficulty accepting **The Christian Year.** Especially obvious in this volume were poems venerating the Blessed Virgin Mary as well as others extolling the sacrament of Absolution.[4]

Another difficulty with all of Keble's poetry is his tendency to use ecclesiastical terminology that was not familiar to many readers. Biblical references from the more popular stories of scripture would be acceptable to a population whose Sunday church attendance was still very high[5], but even this group would tend to balk at obscure references to Hebrew tradition that were so familiar to Keble, especially after his translation of the Psalter.

Finally, the title itself was misleading. Many mistook it for a book of children's poetry - something it definitely was not. The poet, oblivious to his readers, displays his emotions in the same reserved way he had done in **The Christian Year**; and, as a result many of the poems in this second collection are unequalled by anything else John Keble has written.

Modern critics often suggest that one of the reasons for the fall in popularity of **The Christian Year** is that it was overrated by its nineteenth century readers. I suggest that **The Lyra Innocentium**, by being underrated by the same audience, has suffered a similar fate.

2. Miscellaneous Poems

Keble's **Miscellaneous Poems** are aptly named. Some of them had been printed earlier in the **Lyra Apostolica** and identified only by the letter γ.[6] Others were composed to mark specific events, either nationally, locally, or within the Movement. The most popular of these have often been incorporated as appendices to various editions of **The Christian Year** or **The Lyra Innocentium**. In fact a few such as **Gunpowder Treason** have been added to so many editions of **The Christian Year** that the general reader could readily assume that they had always been a part of it.

3. Hymn or Sacred Poem?

The title page of the first edition of **The Christian Year** refers to its contents as 'Thoughts in Verse For Sundays and Holy Days throughout the Year'; in the MS copy Keble entitles each selection as 'Hymn for .....' J.C. Shairp,[7] however, goes to great lengths to emphasize that Keble was a poet and not a hymn writer. As such it is not fair to compare him to recognized hymn writers such as the Wesleys, Whitefield and Cowper. Keble's poetry, both in matters of style and content, is far superior to the type of verse generally found in hymns.

Of the several hundred poems known to have been written by Keble, only seven appear (in modified form) in **Hymns Ancient and Modern** (1861), the traditional hymn book of the Church of England which is still widely used. In every instance, though, these poems had to be drastically adapted in order to be used as hymns, and, as a result, each has lost some of its poetic splendor. Three of his best known, **New Every Morning is the Love**, **Sun of My Soul**, and **Blest are the Pure in Heart** provide excellent examples of this adaptation. In each case what is now the hymn is but a small, disjointed selection of verses from far longer, more unified works.

It is interesting to note that the poems of the seventeenth century divines George Herbert and Henry Vaughan (poets whom Keble greatly admired and often emulated) had to undergo similar adaptations before they could be included in the same hymnal.

In order to determine whether Keble's poems can be classified as hymns, it is first necessary to answer the question - What is a hymn ?

The traditional answer, attributed to St. Augustine, allows for so many exceptions that it often poses more problems than it solves. Augustine claimed that a hymn is:

1. A song - it must be sung for the interaction of words and music.
2. It must be addressed to God.[8]
3. It is a song of praise.

But this formula has been unacceptable to many writers and critics. Dr. Johnson, for example, objected not just to the use of hymns, but to religious poetry in general. He felt that the ideas of Christian theology were too majestic for such ornamentation. 'To the worshiper', he wrote, 'versification is worse than a superficiality; and faith has no need to be invested by fancy with such decorations'. And on another occasion he wrote, 'Repentance, trembling in the presence of the Judge, is not a leisure for cadences'.[9] Yet in spite of objections of this nature, the hymn has survived and in its evolution has developed qualities which distinguish it from religious poetry.

W.G. Horder, writing in 1890, pointed out what he saw to be a distinct difference in the two forms:

> There is a real point of difference between hymns and Sacred Poetry - a hymn is a piece of sacred poetry, but a piece of sacred poetry is not, of necessity, a hymn.[10]

More specifically, Carl F. Price, in the pamphlet **What is a Hymn?**, provides the following definition which was adopted in 193[illegible] by the Hymn Society of America:

> A Christian hymn is a lyric poem, reverently and devotionally conceived, which is designed to be sung and which expresses the worshipers attitude toward God or God's purpose in human life. It should be simple and

metrical in form, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, and in its ideas so direct and so immediately apparent as to unify a congregation while singing it.[11]

Why, then, we may ask, are the simple, sincere compositions of Keble's Christian Year not generally classified as hymns, especially since they appear to meet the criteria set out above? The answer probably hinges on the phrase ideas so direct and so immediately apparent. This quality is not in Keble's work and his flaw is succinctly captured by Horder:

> ...[Keble] falls far below his early friend Newman in depth of thought and compactness of expression. Keble takes pages to set forth what Newman could express in a few lines. Keble descends to details, leaving little for the imagination to fill it; whilst Newman utters suggestive words which draw the mind into larger fields of spiritual thought and feeling.[12]

That Keble's poems were only deemed suitable as hymns after they had undergone drastic excising of supposedly superfluous verses asserts the accuracy of Shairp's final judgment: 'These poems are lyrical religious meditations - not hymns !'.

4. Conclusion

What, then, can be concluded about the poetry of John Keble? During his own lifetime he saw some of his work highly venerated and the remainder politely tolerated. He was the recipient of profuse adulation from many eminent scholars as well as from ordinary readers. Absent from this praise, though, was any positive comment from Wordsworth, and one may assume that Keble felt deeply this implied criticism of his work. It must be admitted, however, that in spite of the immense popularity of the poems, Wordsworth was accurate and reasonable when he remarked on their technical flaws. Throughout **The Christian Year** there are many examples of obscurity of images and, in particular, of syntax.[13]

Much of this obscurity is the result of Keble's tendency to use the figurative device known as **ellipsis**, whereby he would leave out words with the intention of creating a more compact, poetical expression. Examples of this are found in the third stanza of **Holy Baptism**:

> A few calm words of faith and prayer
> A few bright drops of holy dew
> Shall work a wonder there
> (Where) Earths charms never knew.

It is also found in the sixth stanza of **Trinity XIX**:

> He knew not, but there are (those) who know:
> The Matron, who alone hath stood
> When not a drop seemed left below
> The first lorn hour of widowhood,
> Yet cheered and cheering all, the while
> With sad but unaffected smile;-

Although these points are small and rarely affect the overall reading of the poem, they are significant enough to prevent good poetry from becoming great poetry.

Another flaw, certainly as far as Wordsworth was concerned, was Keble's diction, which quite contrary to the Romantic trend was decidedly more in keeping with seventeenth and eighteenth century usage. Keble seemed to want to retain the type of poetic diction from which many poets of his day were trying to escape. His excessive use of archaisms such as the word **fain** (**Christmas I, Advent IV, Christmas II, Epiphany II, Epiphany V, Trinity IV, Trinity XII**) is only exceeded by his use of the term **vernal**. This characteristic is dramatically illustrated in his poem for **Tuesday in Easter Week - To The Snow Drop**, when in eight lines he uses the words: thou| vernal| vestal| 'tis| affright| weav'st. Wordsworth's comment, quoted earlier, about Keble being too influenced by the classics seems clearly justified when faced with such prevalent examples.

Keble remains faithful to his own theory of poetry in his works. His theory of reserve , his aesthetics, and his love of the past, are all apparent throughout his poetry. By his own definition of the terms, he would have been placed in the category of primary poet. Most critics today, however, also put him in the category of minor poet. Yet, such a label is not as derogatory as at first it may appear. T.S. Eliot suggests that minor poet is a catagory into which all writers of religious poetry place themselves:

> For the great majority of people who love poetry, 'religious poetry' is a variety of minor poetry: the religious poet is not a poet who is treating the whole subject matter of poetry in a religious spirit, but a poet who is dealing with a confined part of this subject matter: who is leaving out what men consider their major passions, and thereby confessing his ignorance of them.[14]

Far more scathing, but decidedly less damaging because of his stature as a critic, is the opinion of Geoffrey Faber:

> As a poet, Keble was the Ella Wheeler Wilcox of his time. There is no observation behind the images he employs; no thought behind; no emotion behind his thought, since there is no thought there, nothing but simple assertion; in Mr. T.S. Eliot's phrase, no

'mechanism of sensibility'. There is not even any great technical skill.[15]

To the contrary, Dr. Arnold (of Rugby), a man not known for his flattery, and one of the few people with whom Keble engaged in public controversy, believed that Keble's poetry was of the first order:

> It is my firm opinion that nothing equal to them (Keble's poems) exists in our language. The wonderful knowledge of scripture, the purity of heart, and the richness of poetry which they exhibit, I never saw parallelled.[16]

While Arnold's assessment must be considered excessive, it does show how deeply people were affected in the age by Keble's verse. Most contemporary critics, though usually to a less enthusiastic degree, were of the same opinion.

NOTES

[1] Ernest de Selincourt, Wordsworth Poetical Works (1936, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. 67

[2] See Appendix B.

[3] See Appendix A. In contrast to the obvious popular demand for **The Christian Year**, the success of the **Lyra Innocentium**, which was reprinted in only eight editions prior to Keble's death, could be considered very modest indeed.

[4] The Purification, (p. 328) is an excellent example of a poem which could readily be identified with the Tractarian Party. The following stanza, for instance, is far more extreme in Anglo-Catholic innuendo than anything that had appeared in **The Christian Year**:

> As they prevent the matin prime
> So, might it seem, sweet nature's clime
> Rings out to meet he holy time,
> Heaven's softest airs
> Wait on the Maid who now shall climb
> The Temple stairs.

Penance, (p.161), is another example of a poem with decided 'high church' sentiments.

[5] G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, (London, 1962). Dr. Clarke argues that on the basis of figures in the census of 1851, well in excess of 40% of the

population would be in attendance at church services on any given Sunday.

[6] See Appendix D.

[7] J.C. Shairp, John Keble: An Essay, (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1866). p. 82.

[8] This qualification would disqualify a number of presently 'popular' hymns such as, **Onward Christian Soldiers**, and **Tell me the Old, Old Story.**

[9] Quoted by Frederick John Gillman in The Evolution of the Christian Hymn, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927) p.25.

[10] W. Garrett Horder, The Hymn Lover (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1890). p. 153.

[11] Carl F. Price, Hymn Patterns (New York: Hymn Society of America, 1947). p. 2.

[12] Horder p. 153.

[13] As a young seminarian, and long before I was familiar with the name John Keble, I recall the stifled laughter going through Chapel on Septuagesima Sunday when the hymn **There is a book who runs may read** was announced. This invariably was followed after chapel by a jocular discussion as to just who 'runs' was.

[14] T.S. Eliot, 'Religion and Literature', Essays Ancient and Modern (London: Faber & Faber, 1936) p. 97.

[15] Geoffrey Faber, Oxford Apostles (London: Faber & Faber, 1933) p. 98.

[16] Walter Lock, John Keble (London: Methuen, 1893) p.54.

V

THE PROFESSOR

THE CHAIR OF POETRY AT OXFORD

Founded in 1708 by Henry Birkhead, a Fellow of All Souls, the position provided the recipient a five year appointment which was renewable for a similar period. It also provided for a certain mandatory rotation in that successive occupants could not come from the same college.[1]

The Chair had been established for two main reasons. First, to provide for the reading of the 'old poets' towards the 'sharpening and making ready and nimble the wits of the young'; and, second, for the same reading is conducive 'to addition being made to more serious literature, whether sacred or profane'.[2]

In his brief introduction to an Appendix entitled The Chair of Poetry in A History of English Criticism, George Saintsbury writes:

> No part of Mr. Arnold's best critical work was, I think, done for the Chair; and I should myself be inclined to select , as the best work actually done for it, that of John Keble, who represents the combination of the old Classical - Preceptist tradition, with something of the new comparison and free expatiation,

as well as very much of the purely appreciative tendency.[3]

Alba H. Warren, like Saintsbury, believes that the two great names to fill the Chair in the nineteenth century were Keble and Arnold: Although they seem so diametrically opposite, Warren rather successfully attempts to show their not so obvious similarities. Apart from being family acquaintances (Keble was Arnold's god-father), they, like so many other intellectuals of their day, fell under the influence of the Tractarians:

> And the debt was not only spiritual or moral, it was aesthetic also. They had a common possession - a deep love and reverence for Wordsworth, and it is worthwhile to compare Keble's studied, yet happy dedication of his lectures with Arnold's **Memorial Verses** on Wordsworth.[4] Attention has often been called to the somewhat surprising title prefixed by Keble to these same lectures, **De Poeticae Medica**. Is it fanciful to suggest that Arnold's well known expression about Wordsworth's 'healing powers' is borrowed from this heading?[5]

DE POETICAE MEDICA

During the ten years that John Keble held the position of Professor of Poetry at Oxford, he delivered a series of forty lectures. All of these lectures were delivered in Latin. T.H. Warren,[6] in his own **Inaugural Lecture**, recounts

the transition from Latin to English as the language used in the lectures, pointing out that rather paradoxically, the Chair of English Poetry was one of the last bastions at Oxford to hold firm against this trend. In this description, Warren points out a rather minor contradiction in Keble's views on this matter. Firstly, his review of **The Lectures of Copleston** contains a condemnation of the practice, 'a dead language is almost a gag to the tongue in delivering ideas at once so abstract and so delicately distinguished'.[7] Yet eighteen years later, when he himself is in the same Chair, he returns to the practice on the grounds that it would make him more careful when passing judgments.

With few exceptions, the lectures are similar in length and it would appear that each could be delivered in approximately one and one half hours. In print (both in the original Latin and in the English translation of 1913) they fill in excess of 1600 pages. It is my intention in the remainder of this Chapter to write a precis of the lectures in order to identify the various parts that ultimately combine to produce the theory of poetry that Keble was attempting to proclaim. This theory, it will be seen, is consistent with the practice employed by Keble in writing his own poetry.

LECTURES I - V

The first five lectures (including the Inaugural Oration) are the most diverse and far ranging of the whole series. Keble introduces the topic; attempts to justify his use of Latin (apparently against the growing criticism of the practice); and then lays the foundation upon which he intends to build his thesis. In short, he proposes to submit a theory and then test it on the greatest poets of antiquity. At the conclusion of **Lecture** I he clearly states his first premise - a premise from which the title for the whole course of lectures was to evolve:

> Let us therefore deem the glorious art of Poetry a kind of medicine divinely bestowed upon man: which gives healing relief to secret mental emotion, yet without detriment to modest reserve: and while giving scope to enthusiasm, yet rules it with order and due control. But while all unanimously acclaim its eminent efficacy in this regard, it has occurred to no one, as far as I know, to make use of this special feature as the starting point for explaining the origin of Poetry, and as the means of dividing it into its various branches.[8]

Keble suggests that even 'simple men' evince a type of inborn poetic sensibility in their attachment to particular places, their regard for the departed, and in their

ceremonial worship of God (i.e. nature; tradition; religion). He emphasizes the wider use of the term **poetical** as it is depicted in painting, sculpture, architecture, and music. He even extends the concept to oratory and prose, thus indicating that poetry finds expression in everything, but especially in Art.

Quoting Plato, Keble uses the phrase also adopted by Cicero 'All liberal and humane studies are linked together by a certain bond of union'. Poetry, says Keble, although it may be referred to by another name, is really a bond which links the disciplines.

At this stage he introduces the second factor upon which his poetic theory is to be built - the classification of poets. All poets, says Keble, fall into one of two categories - the Primary and the Secondary. In the first category are those poets 'born in the Muses' home' who are 'poets in their own right'. They sing because they must give vent to some strong permanent feeling which keeps recurring throughout the whole of their lives. Only certain select poets meet these rigid criteria; those who do not are relegated to the catagory of the Secondary poets. Members of this group are either stirred for the moment by a genuine passing emotion, or more often, they are clever imitators of the Primary. The formula Keble uses to classify the two groups is astutely summarized by Walter Lock:

> The form of poetry is never taken as the dividing line, though it is used at times as a clue to guide the

reader to the truest and most genuine feeling in the poet, on the ground that the truth of feeling feels after the truth of form. The most trustworthy tests are modesty, reserve, the absence of paradox and display, and above all, consistency. That poet is the highest poet who

> '... when brought
> Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
> Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought.'[9]

Before testing his thesis on the works of the 'ancients', as he initially promised, Keble decides to introduce yet another point to his theory. And an important one it was to become, both for his poetry, his religious beliefs and for his personal life. Speaking disparagingly of an excessive use of novelty (and using Young's **Night Thoughts** as a recent example), he introduces his doctrine of reserve, for the first time, in the lectures:

> Common everyday experience will be sufficient to show us the kind of expression we expect in a man genuinely moved by some deep emotion. Once a strong feeling has touched him to the quick, all that he utters will suggest the current of his troubled passion: and yet not quite plainly and openly. He cannot bring himself to confess all to all men, but like a harp lightly touched, he needs but very few notes to convey his real meaning to sympathetic hearts.

' Her faltering tongue forbids to speak the rest '.

- Dryden

That is the kind of expression one looks for in those enthralled by love, and it also well becomes poets enthralled by some beauteous vision.[10]

Claiming such reserve to be the central premise on which his theory is founded, Keble draws on the Fathers of the Church, and short references to Virgil, Horace, Lucan, Pindar (to all of whom he will return at length in later lectures) and to the **Lamentations of Jeremiah** to reenforce his point.

Having thus set the stage by proclaiming his theory, he next begins a process of testing that theory on a series of classical writers, beginning with Homer.

LECTURES VI - XV (HOMER)

Homer, who unhesitatingly is given the status of Primary Poet, receives a fuller and more detailed treatment than any other poet in the series of lectures. Showing Homer's main feeling to be one of regret for the loss of an Age, and the reverence and patriotism that went with it, the **Iliad** is portrayed as a glorification of noble war. Although Achilles is the main character, he is by no means the only one of importance, and Agamemnon, Diomed, Ajax and Hector are all included at appropriate points in the lectures.

The events of the **Iliad** are then contrasted with the tales of Homer's **Odyssey**. Keble sees the **Odyssey** as a work written from the perspective of old age. Ulysses, the old, experienced warrior longing for home, is portrayed as being rightly enthroned at last as king and victor in his own land. The suitors, to Keble, represent sinners - arrogant and void of reverence for the living, the dead, or even the gods. These suitors have no concept of self constraint - a flaw, interjects Keble, which is fatal in all, and so obvious in such an otherwise gifted man as Lord Byron.

This proclamation of the praises of Homer leads the lecturer to make comparisons with two other poets of his era. He likens the abject poverty of Homer to that of Burns, both of whom were thus able to feel sympathy with the poor and destitute. Yet their attitudes are different: Homer attempts to soothe the poor man, looking on wealth as a gift which may or may not be given; Burns, on the other hand, while he loved the simple things associated with poverty, was unable to be content, but constantly chafed under the injustice of it all. He was not able, like Keble (and supposedly Homer), to accept with faith and resignation the popular concept of the Victorian hymn-writer:

> The rich man in his castle
> The poor man at his gate
> God made them high or lowly
> And ordered their estate.[11]

Keble next compares Homer with Milton. He asserts that because of the differences in imagery and the vividness in description in the two poems, it is his contention that Homer could still see when he wrote the **Iliad**, but that he had become blind by the time he wrote the **Odyssey**. Keble suggests that Homer's attitude was much more courageous towards his affliction than was Milton's, despite the courage suggested in Milton's sonnet **On His Blindness**. One cannot help but feel that Keble's attitude (that of a High Church Tory) towards England's blind poet was more tempered by Milton's association with 'popular political causes' than it was by his response to his poetry.

LECTURE XVI (MINOR POETS)

Keble begins this lecture with a digression on what might well be an autobiographical account of his own relationship, as a poet, to his predecessors. He deals with the issue of whether a great poet stimulates or discourages others. Young poets may feel that all has already been accomplished by the great poets of the past, and thus are reluctant to compose poems themselves. But rather, he asks, may not a lesser poet be inspired to greater things by observing the greaterpoets? Keble suggests that the latter would be the case when it came to copying form. He stresses, however, that caution should be exercised against 'servile imitation', which, since it only affects **form**, can be avoided

by the lesser poet writing a different kind of poetry. He concludes that reading the great poets and observing their styles of writing stimulates far more than it harms; and he proceeds to show how the 'Minor Poets', Alcaeus, Sappho, Archilochus, and Simonides, though all under the influence of Homer, were yet eligible to be classified with the Primary Poets. These lesser poets though, are merely part of an interlude, a sort of transition leading to the next great master, the poet Aeschylus.

LECTURE XVII - XXIII (AESCHYLUS)

The high status Keble confers upon Aeschylus is evident from his sensitive and affectionate treatment of his works, especially of the **Oresteia**. Returning to the core of his theory that a Primary Poet must be endowed with a dominant and recurring feeling, Keble credits Aeschylus with two main assets: (1) a hearty love of fighting by land or sea; and (2) a sense of the mystery of human life that evolves into a belief in a overruling Deity. While the jealous and vindictive activities of Zeus in **Prometheus Vinctus** appear to contradict this theory of the deity, these actions are overruled in the **Oresteia**, where Aeschylus' conception of the relationship between God and man is very fully developed. Keble goes so far as to hint that this development may have been completed in the lost sections of the trilogy of which **Prometheus** was part. Going into great detail, and with

obvious enthusiasm, he takes each of the major characters and shows their strengths and weaknesses. But it is in his treatment of Cassandra that Keble is at his best, as his biographer, Walter Lock claims: 'Probably no such sympathetic reading of the character of Cassandra is to be found elsewhere'.[12] Cassandra's role as a prophet, sharing in the events she is predicting, comes, Keble declares, not from the oracles, but as a direct revelation from God:

> ... she is standing witness that they who increase knowledge, increase sorrow for themselves; that the sharer of the secrets of heaven shares them to her own ruin; she has well nigh the dignity of a martyr for the truth. Thus, though unrighteousness triumphs for the time, through the cloud and darkness is seen a hope of retribution: over all is felt a sense that no chance or fatalism is guiding events, but a wise and kindly Providence.[13]

Keble presents both the **Choephoroe** and the **Eumenides** as prime examples of Aeschylus' fuller understanding of the ultimate justice of God. Although mercy triumphs, Justice still hovers in the background to enforce the dual concept of love and fear.

Keble's treatment of Aeschylus is a superb example of literary criticism for any age. That the critic is a theologian, well versed in Hebrew scriptures and ideologies, is never far from the surface. He is unable to resist

drawing parallels between similarities in the concept of ancient Greek dramatists and his own religious thought. Keble will come back to these examples in later lectures when he attempts to use them more fully to endorse the theory he is proclaiming.

LECTURE XXIV - XXVII (PINDAR)

A discussion about the relationship of lyrical poetry to the Homeric Epic and the Aeschylean Drama introduces the next three chapters which are devoted to the poet Pindar. Although more diverse in subject matter and with a tendency to digress, Pindar still qualifies for the Primary category by virtue of his recurring themes - a love of the past and a corresponding love for the national games of Greece. That this might by some be considered too trivial a theme for great poetry is rejected in advance by Keble who claimed that the games themselves, in Pindar's era, closely represented the atmosphere of the heroic age and hence inspired such a vivid treatment in his Odes. Just as the simplicity of country life inspired Walter Scott to write as he did, so the games, and all the events connected with them, inspired Pindar, whom Keble compares to 'a lark, starting from a simple nest in a barren field and then soaring with song into the heights of heaven'. He is one of those rare poets who is able to combine the self confidence of youth with the wisdom and sublime cheerfulness of old age.

LECTURE XVIII (SOPHOCLES)

To Sophocles Keble surprisingly devotes only one lecture, and even more surprisingly, for the first time in the series, he confers upon a major writer the rank of Secondary Poet. This appears to be the lecturer's major blind spot in the **Praelectiones**: because of preconceived ideas he does not do justice to this poet whose treatment here is far more cursory than any of those who preceded him. Keble felt that although Sophocles possessed the gift of a love of home and country, there is no predominant feeling in his work. He is perceived as more of an outsider than a participant in his poetry. The comic element is absent, the minor characters are 'characterless' and he tends to repeat whole scenes from play to play. In fact, the only real concession that Keble is prepared to make for Sophocles is to designate him as the best among those to be placed in the Secondary category.

LECTURE XXIX (EURIPIDES)

At the beginning of this lecture on Euripides, Keble makes a statement that his biographers considered unusual for a person of his known temperment and fixed ideas:

> Just as in ordinary life it not infrequently happens the opinion which we have for years held of some

> particular man, even of one with whom we have lived on terms of intimacy, has to be changed or modified when light has been thrown upon the meaning of his habits and way of life, on that side of his character which perhaps before seems wanting in tenderness or wisdom: so no one who has given himself even but slightly to the study of the Muse can doubt that the same experience meets us in connection with poetry.[14]

In other words, Keble was advising his hearers that they were about to witness an unusual happening - he was about to change his opinion.

With a person such as Keble, this was not as commonplace as one not familiar with his character might have thought. Geoffrey Faber, in his book **Oxford Apostles**, depicts Keble as the most rigidly inflexible person among the leaders of the movement.[15] Yet, at this point in the lectures, Keble admits that as a result of re-examining the **Works of Euripides** for the purposes of these very lectures, he had decided to transfer Euripides from the Secondary category in which he had intended to place him, into the Primary. His faults, points out Keble, are still faults: his lack of feeling; his frequent indulgences into politics; and his habit of separating the choral songs from the plot, to name the most glaring. But behind this is his recurrent, consistent theme of love for human life in all its simple forms. Keble rejects claims concerning Euripides' supposed

hatred of women and the Gods by providing touching examples of Antigone and Polyxena, and also with his very religious portrayals of Hippolytus, Ion, and the Bacchae.

LECTURE XXX - XL (THE PASTORAL POETS)

Lecture XXX and Lecture XXXI represent the transitional stage of the series, wherein Keble prepares the student for the contributions of his last two witnesses, Lucretius and Virgil. He explains that pastoral poetry with an emphasis on description of nature developed somewhat later than the poetry of action. Yet he describes Virgil as a poet of action, while Lucretius was more a poet of thought. Both are unquestionably Primary Poets.

Greek poetry, which began in Sicily and developed in Rome, rarely reflected the Greek appreciation for nature. It is not until Virgil that we find a poet who is so wearied with a life of action that he seeks the solace of nature. Lucretius, wearied with a life of thought, sought a similar solace.

Again, Lucretius fulfills the basic requirement for the Primary category with his dominant theme of a sense of the sadness of human life and the infinite mystery of nature. Although Lucretius blatantly denies the existence of God, Keble generously pardons him on the dual grounds that his mind was touched by madness, and that he lived before the fuller revelation of Jesus Christ. That he admired and wrote

about the infinity of the universe is evidence of his unconscious striving for what men of a later age would refer to as the Christian conception of God.

Keble goes so far as to state, 'It may even happen that while the main theme of a poem is the open denial of the existence of the Gods, yet its tenor and tone is on the side of believers'.[16] So it is with Lucretius. His love of nature and the infinite, his abhorrence of evil, his reverence for the dead, and his preference for truth and eloquence would have made him an ideal candidate for the fuller revelation of the Christian era, had he been born into it.

While Virgil is undeniably a primary poet, he is not given this title because of his **Aeneid**, a work written to please the whims of the Roman Emperor. Instead, Keble stresses Virgil's great love of nature, the dominant theme in his other works. Virgil's love of the pastoral setting, his appreciation of tranquil beauty, his yearning for particular places of his boyhood, and his belief in a universal spirit infused into all life and guiding all history, mark him both as a Platonist and as the inspirer of Dante, whose literary influence was still strongly being felt in Keble's day.

Since Keble does not regard Horace as a Primary Poet, he declares Virgil the last of the Latins to deserve the distinction. And it is with this study of Virgil that Keble brings to a close his ten year term as a Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

NOTES

[1] George Saintsbury, A History of English Criticism (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1949) p. 525.

[2] Saintsbury p. 526.

[3] Saintsbury p. 527.

[4] See Appendix E.

[5] Alba H. Warren, English Poetic Theory, 1825 - 1865 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) p.

[6] T. Herbert Warren, Oxford and Poetry in 1911 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911). This was the title of the Inaugural Lecture delivered by Professor Warren, a successor of Keble to the Chair of Poetry, delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre on June 2, 1911.

[7] Occasional Papers and Reviews p. 151.

[8] Praelectiones p. 22.

[9] Walter Lock, John Keble (London: Methuen & Co., 1893) p. 32.

[10] Praelectiones p. 73.

[11] Cecil Frances Alexander (1823 - 1895) **All Things Bright and Beautiful.** This stanza has been excluded from Anglican Hymnals since 1950.

[12] Lock p. 39.

[13] Lock p. 38. In this passage, Lock is paraphrasing a section of Keble's Lecture.

[14] Praelectiones Vol. II . p. 224.

[15] Geoffrey Faber, Oxford Apostles (London: Faber & Faber, 1933) p. 94 f.

[16] Praelectiones p. 336.

VI

OCCASIONAL PAPERS and REVIEWS

Keble's concept of poetry as presented in the **Praelectiones** is elaborated upon in his **Occasional Papers and Reviews.** This volume contains a collection of Keble's articles which appeared in scholarly journals at different stages in his career. Published in 1877 at the request of Sir John Coleridge, Keble's biographer and lifetime friend, they were edited by E.B. Pusey who wrote the preface and post-script. Also included in the introduction is a letter from John Henry Newman, written in 1875 in answer to Pusey's invitation for him to provide an assessment of Keble's literary achievement. Although refusing to accede to the actual request, in his reply Newman more than fulfills the expectations of the editor, and in so doing provides one of the most revealing and touching insights into the character (and ability) of John Keble of the many tributes on record.[1]

The pieces in **Occasional Papers and Reviews** which came from a number of sources, some of them diverse, range from pastoral letters to essays on ecclesiastical controversies, to works of literary criticism. The contents were reprinted from the major literary journals of the day, such as **The British Critic** and **The Quarterly Review,** and some were

selected from unpublished manuscripts.[2] In addition, the volume contains facsimiles of two pages from Keble's **Common Place Book.**

While this study will be focused on two articles, **Life of Sir Walter Scott** and **Sacred Poetry**, the exclusion of other subjects is not meant to relegate a secondary place to any of them. My choice of the two articles to be considered was deliberate. **Sacred Poetry** was written in 1825, seven years prior to Keble's appointment to the Chair of Poetry, at a time when he was actively involved in the process of compiling **The Christian Year. The Life of Sir Walter Scott**, on the other hand, appeared when he was mid-way in his second term as Professor and when the pattern for the conclusions he was about to reach in his lectures was firmly in place. These papers, then, give a good indication of the evolution of Keble's theory over this period.

THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT (A Review)

While Keble devotes much of his essay to reviewing Scott's life and literary accomplishments as portrayed in Copleston's biography, he takes pains at the same time to lay a foundation for the general discussion on poetry he intends to include. In doing this he also enhances the theory he has been developing throughout the lectures. Attempting to come to grips with the elusive question, 'What is poetry?', he apologizes for what he might ultimately do,

by using Wordsworth's famous lines:

> ... our meddling intellect
> Misshapes the beauteous forms of things -
> We murder, to dissect. [3]

In spite of this ominous Wordsworthian warning, Keble immediately warms to his topic:

> So far as poetry is a development of certain qualities in the human mind and heart, and not merely a work of art or a branch of literature; so far, it may be truly said, that all our speculations concerning it are stopped *in limine*, if we are denied the knowledge of the history and education of the minds from whom it proceeded.[4]

He next presents a rather terse definition:

> **Poetry is the indirect expression in words, most appropriately in metrical words of some over powering emotion, or ruling taste, or feeling, the indirect indulgence whereof is somehow repressed.**[5]

The next several pages of this article are a plea for the concept he has already propounded several times in the **Praelectiones**: the importance of feeling in poetry. Not only is feeling the essence of the best poetry, but to Keble it is also the essence of good religion. In this way he places religion and poetry side by side as the very

compatible sisters he believes them to be. But, rather interestingly at this stage in the development of the Oxford Movement, Keble's thinking will not allow him to make reference to mere 'religion'; it is now the 'Catholic religion' that comes closest to his views in this respect:

> It is not a reproach frequently cast upon the orthodox and Catholic side in theological debate, that the sincerest among them are led, not by reason, but by feelings akin to poetical ones.[6]

As a result, Keble discerns many aspects of this kind of religious life to be particularly relevant to his view of poetry:

> Finally, of the old Catholic views ... of the views of the Fathers it may be said, that they are more practical than any others in the church, filling the soul, even to over flowing, with the highest and greatest objects, and by the doctrine of sacramental signs, assisting her to find and use, everywhere and always, means effectual, though indirect, for realizing to herself those objects, and bringing them near.[7]

Another feature of the preamble of the Scott essay is Keble's reflection on Aristotle's views on Imitation and Expression. While expressing general agreement with Aristotle, Keble adds two significant qualifications: (1) that the thing to be imitated or expressed is some object of

desire or regret, or some other imaginative feeling, of direct indulgence; and (2) that the mode of imitation or expression is indirect, the instruments of it being, for the most part, associations more or less accidental.[8]

Two other major aspects of Keble's theory are also dealt with in this review. One is his long-held theory, discussed in Chapter I of this work, on the reserve of the poet. In this essay, however, he seems more aware of the tension created between the desire for reserve and the necessity of speaking out:

> ... the sort of character which in common life is usually regarded as poetical — the combination of shyness with eagerness, of reserve with enthusiasm: the state of mind which makes people unable to remain quiet yet causes them to shrink, almost with loathing, from anything like an unreserved exposure of their feelings. In sketching the poetical temperament, the traits generally adopted, we imagine, would be such as in Beattie's **Minstrel**:
>
> Responsive to the tuneful pipe, when all
> In sprightly dance the village youth was joined,
> Edwin, of melody aye held in thrall,
> From the rude gambol far remote reclin'd,
> Sooth'd with the soft notes warbling down the wind
>
> or as the following, related by Burns of himself:
>
> 'There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more — I do not know if I should call it <u>pleasure</u> — but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me — than to walk in the sheltered side of the wood, or high

plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain: It is my best season for devotion.'

It is obvious that all such anecdotes tend to exemplify more or less exactly, what has just now been said, of Expression, controuled and modified by a certain reserve, being the very soul of poetry.[9]

The second part of this Review comprises yet another rather belaboured discussion about the classification of Primary and Secondary poets. Little that had not already been promulgated in the **Praelectiones** is presented, although Keble rather surprisingly refuses to recognize Dryden as a Primary poet. He does, however, place him at the head of the secondary category, perhaps forgetting that this was a position he had already awarded to Sophocles. He also states that 'Primary and Secondary are not used to measure the ability of the poet, but the kind and character of the composition'.[10]

Although Keble stresses this last point, it is difficult for the reader to take it very seriously. True, it may be part of the theory, but in practice we find throughout the whole of the **Praelectiones**, as well as throughout this essay, that the terms certainly do bear the connotation of Keble's assessment of the poet's ability. It would seem that Keble's gentle temperament as a critic enticed him to include such a statement to soften the

supposed insult to the reputation of the unfortunate poets who did not quite gain membership in his Primary category.

Having placed Sir Walter Scott in the Primary category, Keble then proceeds to examine his life through his massive works in general and through **The Lay of the Last Minstrel** in particular. In what follows, there are several interesting observations which are significant to the theory Keble has been expounding. He notices many similarities between Scott and Lord Byron, even remarking on the fact that both were lame. He reflects on how differently each coped with this affliction, and sees in Byron's resulting bitterness a tragic waste of God-given potential. Feeling that Byron, under other circumstances, would have been less hostile to religion, he quotes a conversation recorded by Scott:

> I remember saying to him that I really thought if he lived a few years he would alter his sentiments. He answered, rather sharply, 'I suppose you are one of those who prophecy I shall turn Methodist'. I replied, 'No. I don't expect your conversion to be of such an ordinary kind. I would rather look to see you retreat upon the Catholic faith, and distinguish yourself by the austerity of your penances. The species of religion to which you must, or may one day attach yourself, must exercise a strong power over the imagination'.[11]

Although Scott expressed lukewarmness towards the institutional church, to the degree of having services in his home and never producing a single good specimen of an Anglican clergyman in any of his novels, yet his 'sober love of liturgy' endeared him to Keble who saw in him the 'reachings and graspings' of a natural piety. In addition, Keble remarks on Scott's facination with the 'romance of Catholicism', which was such that on his death bed he requested his favourite hymns of the church - The **Stabat Mater** and the **Dies Irae.**

SACRED POETRY

In the **Life of Sir Walter Scott**, Keble followed the format of his lectures by writing in a general vein about the topics being discussed, and then applying his conclusions to the subject under review. Such is not the style in his article entitled **Sacred Poetry**. Written in 1825, it is the earliest of his published works and in it he follows a more conventional style. He enters directly into his topic, a review of Josiah Codner's **The Star in the East, With Other Poems** (1824). Giving the volume the fair but scant attention it deserved, Keble proceeds in the remainder of the essay to reflect upon the nature of sacred poetry in general. The conclusions turn out to be very similar to the ones he will reach later at the close of the **Praelectiones**; and when the two are combined they fairly state Keble's

position, not just on 'sacred' poetry as compared to 'secular', but on all poetry in relation to religion in general and to the Catholic faith in particular. He begins by making a reference to the difficulty of reviewing sacred poetry: because such poems are written with such a degree of sincerity and earnestness 'we naturally shrink from treating them merely as literary efforts'.

It is also interesting to note that in this early essay Keble makes one of his most uncharacteristic comments when he refers to 'the most vicious of all styles, the style of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his miserable followers'.[12] Whether he is flushed with the bravado of youth, or incensed with the matter in hand, such an illusion is never repeated in the remainder of Keble's written work, in spite of the fact that both Brian Martin and Georgina Battiscombe show evidence that he could be blunt and outspoken in conversation.[13]

Keble expresses the fear that as a sacred poet gains in popularity, he runs into the incessant danger of his becoming too worldly in style. This, he feels, is the temptation to which Bishop Thomas Ken succumbed in his later work. Equally important, writes Keble, is the element of simplicity which must never be sacrificed for effect. Above all, poets must use their poetry as a means of releasing their supressed emotions:

> They should write with a view of unburthening their minds, and not for the sake of writing; for love of the subject, not of employment.[14]

In his next dictum we can see the embryo of yet another requirement for the Primary poet - steadfastness of topic:

> The feeling the writer expresses should appear to be specimens of his general tone of thought, not sudden bursts and mere flashes of goodness. Wordsworth's beautiful description of the stock dove might not unaptly be applied to him:-
>
> [He should sing] Of love with silence blending
> Slow to begin, yet never ending
> Of serious faith and inward glee.[15]

Following his premise that poetry cannot be constrained to just poems, Keble makes music an example of one of the many other arts to which this description could be applied:

> ... fervent yet sober; awful but engaging; neither wild and passionate, nor light and airy; but such as we may with submission presume to be the most acceptable offering in its kind, as being indeed the truest expression of the best state of the affections.[16]

The next section of this essay includes a very impressive rebuttal to some of the statements written against the use of sacred poetry by Dr. Samuel Johnson. Delving into the **Life of Waller**, Keble examines the following statement:

> Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to

implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.[17]

Keble refutes Johnson's sentiments by suggesting that a final test can be made:

In fact there is a simple test, by which, perhaps, the whole of his [Johnson's] reasoning on sacred poetry might be fairly and decisively tried. Let the reader, as he goes over it, bear in mind the Psalms of David, and consider whether every one of his statements and arguments is not there practically refuted.[18]

A parting shot is taken at Johnson when Keble identifies yet another classification: those who reflect the spirit of the age in which they write to the complete sacrifice of their own feelings; and conversely, those who use poetry as a means of 'unburthening' their own souls, oblivious to anything else. Chaucer is chosen as an example of the former - and Johnson of the latter. Keble stresses that a combination of the two, if possible, would provide more ideal work. As an ideal, he sees them as 'sincere men, with an intention for doing good, and with consideration of a taste of the age in which they lived.'[19]

This ideal combination, Keble concludes, is best found in English in the works of Spenser and Milton. It must be remembered that at this stage Keble is not using the Primary

/ Secondary classification, but rather is differentiating between 'sacred' and 'secular' poetry. He claims that even without the masterpieces of **The Sheppherdes Calendar** and **The Faerie Queene**, Spenser's hymns would have been sufficient to set him apart as a sacred poet. (Later, in the **Praelectiones** Spenser will be given the Primary status, though Milton will not.) Keble is able to see **The Faerie Queene** as a form of protest against the supposed licentiousness of courtly romance and chivalry. The heroes constantly are on the side of purity and justice, both of which ultimately flourish. 'Spenser', he says, 'is not seductive. Vice in him, no matter how truly described, is always made contemptible and odious.'[20]

On the topic of vice, Keble provides an interesting and characteristic observation:

> Milton looked upon vice as a judge; Shakespeare as a satirist. Spenser was far more indulgent than either and acted therefore the more wisely in setting himself a rule, which should make it essential to the plan of poem, to be always recommending some virtue; and remind him, like a voice from heaven, that the place on which he was standing was holy ground.[21]

According to Keble, the device of allegory should serve both the poet and the reader. On the one hand it serves as a check on the poet's 'fancy' becoming over-indulgent and luxurious. It also provides him an opportunity to practise

'reserve' and not have the emotions too closely identified with his own feelings. On the other hand, the form provides the reader with the opportunity to look at things and to observe 'something beyond their qualities merely sensible; to their sacred and moral and to the high associations they were intended to create in us'.[22] While approving highly of this, Keble urges that it be used with restraint, again citing The Faerie Queene as an excellent example wherein one stanza of allegory is superior to up to fifty stanzas of poetical embellishment of the more conventional kind.

Finally, Keble warns of the danger of allegory degenerating into parody and caricature which 'debase what is truly noble, 'by connecting it with loud and ludicrous associations. Parody and caricature tend to reduce the sacred and noble; allegory enobles what of itself may have seemed trivial'.[23]

Milton does not fare nearly as well as Spenser at the hands of Keble; as a result his remarks about the former show his subjectivity coming to the fore. Realizing that both poets had chosen different types of subjects (Spenser courtly and Milton biblical), Keble none the less makes his judgment on Milton from the perspective of a High Church Tory and allows both his politics and religion to influence his assessment. One blatant example is his evaluation of Milton's Satan, in which Keble expressed his belief that Satan has been too deserving of the poet's sympathy and thus become 'too heroic'. Keble explains this opinion simply, if

not charitably:

> The most probable account of which surely is that the author himself partook largely of the haughty and vindictive spirit which he assigned to his characters.[24]

At the same time he advocates an uncharacteristic and rather liberated opinion against Milton's treatment of women. In Book VIII of Paradise Lost, when Eve refuses to enter into any discussion with the angel, Milton describes her action:

> Such pleasure she reserved
> Adam relating, she sole auditress.[25]

Keble refuses to accept this as an explanation of Eve's motives:

> The sentiment may be natural enough, since the primeval curse against women: but does it not argue rather too strong a sense of her original inferiority to put it into her mind <u>before</u> the fall?[26]

Keble concludes this review with an ironic, and in some respects a prophetic, statement that may be applied to his own reputation as a writer. Adding to his list of sacred poets the names of Drayton, Cowley, Herbert, Crashaw and Quarles, he pleads for a more indulgent and 'Catholic' spirit in the field of criticism. All of those listed

suffer, he claims, 'for having been overpraised in their own days'; and he adds, 'they are come now to be as much under valued'.[27]

NOTES

[1] See Appendix B.

[2] Occasional Papers and Reviews p. xiii.

[3] William Wordsworth, The Tables Turned ll. 26-28.

[4] Occasional Papers and Reviews p. 4.

[5] Ibid. p. 6.

[6] Ibid. p. 7.

[7] Ibid. p. 16.

[8] Ibid. p. 16.

[9] Ibid. p. 19.

[10] Ibid. p. 22.

[11] Ibid. p. 74.

[12] Ibid. p. 87.

[13] Brian Martin, John Keble (London: Groom Helm, 1976) and Georgina Battiscombe, John Keble: A Study in Limitations (London: Constable, 1963).

[14] Occasional Papers and Reviews p. 88.

[15] Ibid. p. 90.

[16] Ibid. p. 91.

[17] Ibid. p. 91.

[18] Ibid. p. 95.

[19] Ibid. p. 98.

[20] Ibid. p. 99.

[21] Ibid. p. 99.

[22] Ibid. p. 99.

[23] Occasional Papers and Reviews p. 100

[24] Ibid. p. 104.

[25] John Milton, Paradise Lost (London: Everyman: 1913) ll. 50, 51. p.272.

[26] Occasional Papers and Reviews p. 103.

[27] Ibid. p. 105.

VII

THE FORGOTTEN CRITIC

Professor Keble, as a literary critic, was more important in the nurturing of nineteenth-century criticism, than his neglect has given cause to show.[1]

In the list of notable proponents of English critical theory in the late eighteenth and in all of the nineteenth century, there are few outstanding names. Wordsworth's **Preface to Lyrical Ballads** (1800 ed.); part of Coleridge's **Biographia Literia**; Hazlitt's **Handbook** and **Bibliographical Notes**; and Matthew Arnold's **Essays in Criticism** (1st. & 2nd. series), are the ones which most readily come to mind. The name of John Keble is rarely mentioned in this company, and when he is recalled at all, it is rather as 'a writer of Anglican hymns', or as 'the leader of the Oxford Movement'. Neither of these two descriptions does justice to the literary contribution of this man who knew far more about the art of poetry than he did about actually composing poems.

Nor is it accurate to say that the impact of his lectures was lost because they were written and delivered in

Latin. The comparative ease with which this language could be understood and translated in the early nineteenth century would make their widespread availability almost as certain as if they had been in English. Indeed, their counterpart, the **Occasional Papers and Reviews**, were composed in English, and yet they, even after publication in 1877, remained equally obscure.

Yet, as has been indicated, a combination of the **Praelectiones** and the **Occasional Papers and Reviews** presents Keble's distinctive and original views on poetry that differed from his contemporaries, and in a unique way predicted the trend that literary criticism would to some extent follow in the near future. His views on the interdependence of art and the age in which it is created, as well as on the cathartic value of writing poetry to the poet, anticipate the theories of Ruskin and Arnold and foreshadow the atmosphere that has been created by much of Freud's writings.

Unlike many other critics, Keble did attempt to write a precise definition of poetry. Yet, having done this, he deprecates his achievement with characteristic humility in the final lecture of the **Praelectiones**:

> I see how that I have only been a worker in a corner of a very wide territory, and that I have not explained what poetry is in itself, but rather have pointed to certain sure marks and attributes of it.[2]

This rather self-effacing claim is magnificiently refuted by Brian Martin, who catches the real spirit of the work in his recent book:

> If Keble's forty lectures were a failure, they were a splendid and interesting failure; and they represent the largest part of his literary struggle to define his theories about poetry. His two classes of poet, the Primary - inspired, original, driven by impulse, consistent, reverent, reserved, religious in the sense of awe and admiration that Nature or God through Nature is regarded - and the Secondary -- the imitators and the artificial - Keble made abundantly clear, and by examples he illustrated and enforced his arguments.[3]

Why, then, is John Keble so little known in a field where it would appear that he should be much more prominent? On the rare occasions when he is mentioned by other critics such as M.H. Abrams in **The Mirror and The Lamp**, or by historians of English criticism such as Saintsbury in his **A History of English Criticism**, he is highly praised, while his obscurity is lamented.

It is my contention that John Keble was a victim of his own premature success. The enthusiastic and widespread acceptance of **The Christian Year** made him as familiar to the Victorians as were Bunyan, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning. Every literary contribution he made, without exception, was overshadowed in the minds of his readers by

this modest book of poems. Unfortunately, the long shadow cast by this volume was composed of largly mediocre work. In this shadow, and destined never to emerge from it, were the important thoughts of an interesting literary figure. When **The Christian Year**, the lesser work, no longer suited public taste, (and the amazing thing is that it remained in it for so long), the truly greater work, the criticism, which well could have existed on its own merit and was never properly recognized, passed away with it.

Thus Keble passed from the scene, a sad example of unrecognized achievement. Although the most likable of the Oxford Movement leaders, he, like his contemporaries, has been dwarfed in that area as well by the charisma, the talent, and the literary skills of John Henry Newman. And although Keble was undoubtedly the most original thinker to occupy the Chair of Poetry up to his time, his own contribution is now only remembered to the extent that it has shaped the theory of his successors.

Yet the reasons for this are more the fault of the man himself, than of an unappreciative public. Such was the character of this retiring, unassuming pastor, that he would probably consider his present obscurity his greatest reward.

NOTES

[1] Brian Martin, John Keble (London: Groom Helm, 1976) p. 104.

[2] Praelectiones Vol.II p. 465.

[3] Martin p.103.

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APPENDIX A

As has been noted, Keble was both surprized and embarrassed by the success of **The Christian Year.** Not only did he donate the royalities to the construction of a new parish church at Hursley, but he was reluctant to have any reference made to the enormous success of this book:

> Of Keble's own reaction to his startling success there remains very little record, only the curious fact, remarked on by many of his friends, that in later years he could not bear any reference to **The Christian Year** to be made in his presence. When his pupil, Charlotte Yonge, had a similar experience in the unexpected success of **The Heir of Redcliffe**, he warned her that a successful book could be the greatest trial of a lifetime. [Georgina Battiscombe, John Keble: A Study in Limitations. (London: Constable, 1963) p. 113]

The following lines, also believed to be indicative of his distress in this matter, were found written in an old pocket book, dated September 10, 1823:

AT BARROW ELM

O that my spirit were a choir, a place
Where holy thoughts might meet to sing Thy Grace!

So once it was, or seemed awhile, but now
'Tis dull and tuneless all, I know not how;
Faint cries, like little birds asleep in pain,
Are now the most my music can attain.

[Papers, p viii (n)]

Yet before his death Keble saw ninety-five editions of the book appear, and this number was to rise to one hundred and nine just one year later. From the date of the first edition until the expiration of the copyright in 1873 there were a total of 140 editions with 305,500 copies printed. The following interesting table was supplied by the publishers, Messrs. Parker & Co.

From 1827 to the end of	1837	16 editions	26,500 copies
1838	1847	14	39,000
1848	1857	19	63,000
1858	1867	60	119,500
1868	1883	31	57,500
TOTALS		**140**	**305,500**

Exact numbers of editions and variations (eg. **The Christian Year Birthday Book; The Christian Year Gift Book; The Christian Year Text Book**) cannot be compiled with accurracy since the copyright expired in 1873. However, the following figures have been gleaned from the **British Library** collection catalogue in July, 1986:

1874	2	1892	1
1875	3	1893	2
1876	1	1894	1
1877	1	1895	2
1878	2	1896	1
1879	2	1897	2
1880	5	1898	2
1881	1	1899	-
1882	2	1900	1
1883	2	1901	1
1884	2	1902	1
1885	1	1903	1
1886	2	1904	1
1887	4	1905	-
1888	-	1906	-
1889	1	1914	1 *
1890		1977	1 **
1891	-		

* Dent **Everyman** Series - text contains author's revisions.

** Published by **Society of St. Peter & St. Paul**, using the 1914 text, in preparation for the 1983 anniversary of the beginning of the Oxford Movement. This is the latest edition to be published to date.

As early as 1877, Dr. Pusey, in the Preface to **Occasional Papers and Reviews**, wrote concerning **The Christian Year**:

> There can be but few examples of this kind in the history of books, and there is probably no other where the book in question is entirely composed of original religious poetry. [Papers. p. viii (n)]

Pusey's claim remains unchallanged to this day.

APPENDIX B

(When Pusey was compiling the **Occasional Papers and Reviews** for publication, he wrote Keble's friend John H. Newman for a literary assessment of his former collegue. So impressive was the reply that Pusey incorporated it into the Preface he was preparing for the edition.
Since I make reference to this letter on several oocasions in the preceeding chapters, and since it reveals so much of the personalities of both Keble and Newman, I print it here in its entirity.)

"Dear---

"I WISH it were easier for me than it is to comply with the request you have made me to give you my judgment upon Mr. Keble's literary merits. Not that it would be any great effort to descant in a general way on his various endowments as an author, on his learning, his conscientiousness, his incessant and perservering industry, and the classical taste with which he writes; but praise of this kind, to which others besides him have a claim, would come very short of doing justice to him, or of satisfying you. Yet I should not succeed in the attempt to do more; and, in going on to tell you why, I shall be doing something towards suggesting how I should shape my criticism about him, if such criticism were in my power.

"My difficulty lies first in the circumstance that,

various as are his works, for one reason or other, they present, amid that variety, so little direct matter for criticism. The volume which has made him so specially famous, is of that rare kind, which scarcely comes under the idea of literature; and such, too, is its sequel, the **Lyra Innocentium.** His translation of the Psalms, highly valued as it is by Hebrew scholars, belongs to a department of literary labour too closely connected with grammatical science to be easily included under the term 'literature'. His greatest literary work, his 'Lectures on Poetry', so full of acute remark and so beautiful in language, is in Latin. Then, as to his occasional compositions, in prose and verse, though they are both valuable as his and worthy of him, still they neither created his high reputation, nor can be taken as the measure of it. Lastly, of his edition of Hooker I will say this,-- that the learning and research, the pains and the achievements of an editor are emphatically underground and out of sight; and if there was a man who, from reverence towards his author, as well as from an innate modesty and an habitual disregard of self, would put his author in the front and would hide behind him, it was Mr. Keble.

"How can I profess to paint a man who will not sit for his picture? how can I draw out his literary merits, when he considers it his special office to edit, or to translate, or to discourse in a dead language, or to sing hymns?

"It was no accident that he is thus difficult to bring under the jurisdiction of the critic. He had as little aim at literary success in what he wrote, as most authors have a thirst for attaining it. He was ever jealous of the prospect or desire of it, whether as regards himself or those in whom he took an interest. I recollect his borrowing a friend's sermon, which had been preached before the University, and, I suppose, had been well spoken of to him. When he returned it, he whispered into his friend's ear, 'Don't be original'. He practised himself the restraint which he recommended to others. On one occasion he preached a sermon in the University pulpit which made a great impression. Hurrell Froude and I left St. Mary's so touched by it, that we did not speak a word to each other all the way down to Oriel. He found out what we thought of it, and doubtless heard it praised in other quarters. His next sermon was a great disappointment to his hearers; it was without unity, point, or effectiveness. Something occurred, I forget what, to explain to us how this came about. It arose from his vigilance over himself, and his scrupulousness lest in his former sermon he had so handled a sacred subject as to lead his audience to think rather of him than of it.

"To me, indeed, in proportion as I came to know him well, nothing he wrote could really be a failure; and here is a second reason why I am so little qualified to take upon

me the task of criticizing him. His own familiar apophthegm, which he used when a preacher was the subject of conversation, 'All sermons are good', I learned to apply to his own compositions, whether on religious subjects or not. They all spoke of Keble. And still I am unable to separate the writer from the man; or to view him as poet, critic, scholar, reviewer, editor, or divine, except as those aspects of him are gathered up in one in his own proper personality. I have too often heard him lecture, preach, and converse, not to have gained a habit of associating his matter and his diction with his living and breathing delivery. I have in my ears still the modulations and cadences of his voice, his pauses and emphatic points; I recollect what music there was in the simple earnestness and sweet gravity with which he spoke; the way he held his paper, his gesture, his look, are all before me. I cannot judge even of his style impartially; phrases and collocations of words, which others would call imperfections in his composition, are to me harmonized by the remembrance how he uttered them.

"And here I am brought to one reason more, why I feel myself unfitted to pass a literary judgment on Mr. Keble: it is because I have not the skill to discriminate what is of intellectual origin in his writings from what is of ethical. There are writers who have nothing to recommend them but their talent, and who never would be mistaken for men of high moral intuitions; and there are others whom we

love for their religious qualities, and whom no excess of partiality on our part could ever make us call clever or able. In such cases criticism is very easy; but, in proportion as the standard, whether intellectual or ethical, rises, so are these distinct mental provinces confused together by the ordinary observer, and what belongs to the one is hastily ascribed to the other. Thus, at the present day especially, the calm of a philosophical mind looks like Christian peace, and a poet or novelist is able, from his dramatic powers, to compose hymns, or draw characters, or depict scenes, which are altogether foreign to his own nature. On the other hand, what sounds like sharp satire or witty irony, or again deep thoughts tersely expressed, or original views, or beautiful images, may proceed from the lips of children and the uneducated, out of their very ignorance and simplicitiy, out of their mental independence and habit of reflection; as we are reminded in the well-known tale in the interview of the Scottish dairymaid with Queen Caroline. Or, to take an illustration of the highest and most sacared kind, as inspiration, a gift for moral and theological purposes, has, by an indirect effect, made the writers of Scripture poets and philosophers.

"As to Mr. Keble, all I venture to say of him in this respect is this: - that his keen religious instincts, his unworldly spirit, his delicacy of mind, his tenderness of others, his playfulness, his loyalty to the Holy Fathers, and his Toryism in politics, are all ethical qualities, and

by their prominence give a character of their own, or (as I have called it) personality, to what he has written; but these would not have succeeded in developing that personality into sight and shape in the medium of literature, had he not been possessed of special intellectual gifts, which they both elicited and used.

"Please do not hesitate for a moment in sending this back to me, supposing you consider (as I shall not be surprised to find) that it does not answer as a substitute for that service to Mr. Keble's memory, which you did me the kindness and honour to ask of me, and which I have been obliged to decline.

"I am, dear ----,

"Sincerely yours,

"JOHN H. NEWMAN."

"October 29, 1875.

APPENDIX C

LITERARY WORKS OF THE REVEREND JOHN KEBLE

[Only the Works consulted for this thesis are listed in the main Bibliography]

The Christian Year - 1827

Poems marked γ in **Lyra Apostolica** - 1836

Ode to the Installation of the Duke of Wellington - 1834

Tracts for the Times (No. 4; 13; 40; 89)

Sermon preached and printed at Brighton (St.Luke X:20)

Two Sermons preached at St. Barnabas - published by Cleaver

'The New Assertions of Our Lady': A Sermon

A Sermon in St. Barnabas; Consecration Volume

Article in **British Critic** on Life of Sir Walter Scott - 1838

Article in **Christian Remembrancer** on Synod of Exeter - 1850

Article in **Christian Remembrancer** on Parochial Work - 1850

Considerations suggested by a late Pastoral Letter - 1858

Preface to **Works of Hooker**, Oxford University Press, - 1841

Volume of Sermons (with long Preface) - 1847

Plain Sermons - Volumes VI & VII - 1846

Heads of Consideration (About Mr. Ward) - 1845

Duty of Hoping Against Hope - 1846

On Translation From Dead Languages - 1812 (Prize Essay)

On Eucharist Adoration - 1857

An Argument Against the Divorce Bill - 1857

Sequel to Argument - 1857

Letter to Sir Brook Bridges - 1852

On Admission to Dissenters - 1854

Rich and Poor: One in Christ - 1858

Easter Day Sermon - 1858

Against Profane Dealing With Holy Matrimony

Life of Bishop Wilson - 1863

Three Sermons in St. Saviours, Leeds. - 1845

Sundry Plain Sermons

Sermon at Jedburgh - 1845

The Strength of Christ's Little Ones - 1849

Lyra Innocentium - 1846

Address to Communicants on Subject of Holy Baptism

Many letters in **Guardian** newspaper

Sundry Addreses to Parishioners

A Letter about the Proposed Re-election of Sir Robert Peel

The Oxford Psalter

An Article on Millers Brampton Lectures

Women Labouring in the Lord: A Sermon at Wantage

A Litany of Our Lord's Warnings - 1864

Pentecostal Fear: A sermon - 1846

Address to the Newly Confirmed at Hursley - 1865

Praelectiones Academicae - 1843

Church Matters in 1850

Pastoral Letter to Parishioners at Hursley - 1851

Catholic Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles - 1841

Seed Time and Harvest: A Sermon - 1864

Many Unpublished Poems

APPENDIX D

A Note on the **Lyra Apostolica**

This wide ranging collection of poetry was first published in 1836. Edited by Newman, all of the poems had appeared previously in the **British Magazine**. The contributors agreed to remain annonomyous, though each would be designated a specific letter from the Greek alphabet by which all of his poems could be identified. Keble's 46 poems, all signed by the letter γ, were as follows:

XV	The Three Absolutions
XVII	Encouragement
XLIX	Breavement
L	Burial of the Dead
LX	Lights in the Temple
LXI	Lights at Vespers
LXII	Lights in the Upper Chamber
LXIII	Lights in the Church
LXIV	Lights in the Closet
LXXVI	The Watch by Night
LXXXIV	The Vigil
LXXXIX	The Winter Thrush
XCVII	The African Church
XCVIII	Hooker
C	The One Way
CXIV	Profanation

CXV	Athanasian Creed
CXVI	Burial Service
CXVII	Length of Prayers
CXVIII	A Remanent
CXXIII	The Patrioty
CXXIV	The Ruler of Nations
CXXV	The Avenger
CXXVI	The Herald of Woe
CXXVII	The Comforter
CXXXIV	Suppression of the Irish Sees
CXLI	United States
CXLVI	The Watchman
CXLVII	The Creed
CXLVIII	Spoliation
CXLIX	Church and King
CL	Oxford
CLI	Nadab and Abihu
CLII	The Burning at Tubenah
CLIII	Korah, Dathan and Abiram
CLIV	Elijah and the Messengers
CLV	The Samaritans Spared
CLVI	Julian
CLVII	The Fall of Babylon
CLVIII	Divine Wrath
CLXI	Calling
CLXII	Tokens
CLXIII	Seals

CLXIV Gifts

CLXV Arms

CLXVIII The Gathering of the Church

The six contributors to the volume, with their respective contributions and number of poems are as follows:

- Bowden, John William 6
- Froude, Richard Hurrell 8
- Keble, John 46
- Newman, John H. 119
- Wilberforce, Robert 1
- Williams, Isaac 9

The **Lyra Apostolica** enjoyed immediate success and was very popular within the Oxford Movement. It was one of the books that Walter Bagehot and his wife read together on their honeymoon! J.A. Froude attempted to assess the reason behind the popularity of this volume when he wrote:

> Poems ... were unlike any other religious poetry that was then extant. It is hard to say why they were so facinating. They had none of the musical grace of **The Christian Year**. They were not harmonious; the metre halted, the rhymes were irregular; yet there was something in them that seized the attention and would not let go. [J.A. Froude, The Oxford Counter-Reformation (London: Longmans, 1883) p. 108]

APPENDIX E

John Keble paid two glowing public tributes to William Wordsworth. When Wordsworth was honoured with a degree by Oxford University in 1839, it was Keble's turn, as Professor of Poetry to deliver the Creweian Oration at the Commemoration. The main paragraph of the Oration, delivered in Latin, and as translated by J.T. Coleridge, reads:

> On this also I might insist, that the University, and so Letters themselves, cannot well be without that austere and solid sweetness, with which youth well and wisely spent in poverty is wont to flavour those who are submitted to its training. But I judged, Gentlemen of the University, that I should satisfy, and more than satisfy, what this topic demands, if only I should recall to your recollection him, (specially now as in this honourable circle which surrounds me he is himself present), who of all poets, and above all has exhibited the manners, the pursuits, and the feelings, religious and traditional, of the poor,-- I will not say in a favourable light merely, but in a light which glows with the rays of heaven. To his poetry, therefore, they should, I think, be now referred, who sincerely desire to understand and feel that secret harmonious intimacy which exists between honourable Poverty, and the severer Muses, sublime Philosophy, yea, even our most holy Religion.

Later, when the **Praelectiones** were published in 1844, Keble dedicated the volume to Wordsworth in the following words:

To William Wordsworth

True Philosopher and Inspired Poet

Who By The Special Gift and Calling of Almighty God

Whether He Sang of Man or of Nature

Failed Not To Lift Up Men's Hearts To Holy Things

Nor Ever Ceased To Champion the Cause

Of The Poor and Simple

And So in Perilous Times Was Raised Up

To Be A Chief Minister

Not Only Of Sweetest Poetry

But Also Of High And Sacred Truth

This Tribute, Slight Though It Be, Is Offered

By One of the Muititude Who Feel Ever Indebted

For the Immortal Treasure of His Splendid Poems

In Testimony of

Respect, Affection, and Gratitude