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## “National Apostasy,’ Tracts for the Times, and Plain Sermons: John Keble's Tractarian Prose.”

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## 6

## 'NATIONAL APOSTASY', TRACTS FOR THE TIMES AND PLAIN SERMONS: JOHN KEBLE'S TRACTARIAN PROSE

Robert H. Ellison

For nearly two hundred years, John Keble's reputation has rested largely on his poetry. Scholars have, of course, given some attention to other subjects – his role in the Oxford Movement; his relationships with Newman, Pusey, Williams and Froude; his pastoral work at Hursley, and so on – but it is probably safe to say that he is best known as a contributor to *Lyra Apostolica*, the author of *Lyra Innocentium* and especially as the man who gave the world *The Christian Year*.

I am not at all suggesting that Keble's poetry ought not to be studied, but I do believe that there is an aspect of Keble's work that has not been adequately considered. Keble himself commented on this in an 1858 letter to John Taylor Coleridge: 'I wish', he wrote, 'people would consider my prose as well as like my verses' (Coleridge, 480). By this time, *The Christian Year* had gone through nineteen editions and sold in excess of 60,000 copies (Beek, 183), but his canon of approximately forty prose works – mostly pamphlets and individual sermons, but also a few longer works on poetry and religion and multi-volume editions of the Fathers, Richard Hooker and Thomas Wilson – had received relatively little attention. The situation has not changed a great deal since then; as far as I am aware, we still do not have any extensive examinations of Keble's essays, tracts and sermons.

In this paper, I will offer at least the beginnings of the consideration Keble may have had in mind. I cannot, of course, discuss his entire canon, so I will focus on the works most closely associated with his Tractarian years: 'National Apostasy', his eight *Tracts for the Times* and his contributions to a little-known, ten-volume series entitled *Plain Sermons, by Contributors to the 'Tracts for the*

*Times*'. The subtitle identifies this collection as a companion to the *Tracts*, as does the Advertisement, which indicates that the sermons are intended to 'show that the subjects treated of in the 'Tracts' were not set forth as mere parts of ideal systems...but are rather urged as truths of immediate and essential importance, bearing more or less directly on our every day behaviour' (2). Taken together, these works help provide a sense of the range of Keble's ideas and expressions as a theologian and a preacher.

The best-known example of Keble's prose is 'National Apostasy', the Assize Sermon he preached in St Mary's church on 14 July 1833. Its structure and style are similar to his other sermons. J. T. Coleridge once described Keble's parochial discourses as 'truly Christian sermons, opening out the Scripture, full of citations from it, going directly to the heart that would open to receive it; affectionate, earnest, true, and high; but very simple, very unadorned' (Coleridge, 496). The same can be said of 'National Apostasy'. Keble asserts that, contrary to some popular opinion, the Old Testament has lost none of its relevance in the Christian age, and that the story of Samuel is especially instructive for Victorian Britain, a nation which, like ancient Israel, had committed the great sin of supposing that it 'may do well enough, as such, without God, and without His Church' (Keble (1931), 7). His exposition is replete with allusions to and citations from I and II Samuel, and he quotes a few passages from several other books as well. It is not, however, a complicated theological treatise. The style is simple and conversational, accessible to anyone who heard or read the sermon. It calls to mind the assessment of the parishioner who, when asked whether he thought Keble a great preacher, replied, 'Well, I don't know what a great preacher is...but he always made us understand him' (Lock, 193).

Most importantly, Keble emphasizes practical application, the *raison d'être* of the Victorian sermon.<sup>1</sup> He is concerned not only with the theoretical, outlining the 'symptoms' that indicate when a nation is 'becoming alienated from God and Christ', but also with the practical, setting forth 'the particular duties of sincere Christians' living in 'a time of such dire calamity' (Keble (1931), 9). These duties are twofold: constant 'intercession' for 'the State, and all who are in authority', followed by public and private 'remonstrance' with those who are leading the country astray (19, 20). Christians who act in such a manner, Keble says, are sure to be rewarded: they are assured that, 'sooner or later, [theirs] will be the winning side, and that the victory will be complete, universal, eternal' (24).

The form of the sermon is familiar, but the occasion and audience, and therefore the content, are somewhat atypical. Like other Assize Sermons, the preaching of 'National Apostasy' was a religio-political event: it was a response to recent Erastian developments, based upon an Old Testament text, preached

from the University pulpit, for an audience of His Majesty's judges. The *Tracts*, on the other hand, speak to the clergy and laity about matters of Apostolic faith, not the current crisis in the Victorian state, and the *Sermons* are parochial addresses marking not the beginning of a judicial term, but rather confirmations, church consecrations and major and minor dates in the Christian year. It is therefore not surprising that the political content we find in 'National Apostasy' is largely absent from these works.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, do we find in Keble's *Tracts for the Times* and *Plain Sermons*? One of the first things we notice about Keble's tracts is their variety of form. Two (Nos. 4 and 13) are brief essays; one (No. 89) is a 186-page theological treatise; four (Nos. 52, 54, 57 and 60) are sermons; and one (No. 40) is a dialogue between an unnamed narrator and a man named Richard Nelson. In each case, however, as we would expect, these documents all promote some essential doctrines of the Oxford Movement. Apostolic Succession, the first tenet mentioned in the Advertisement to Volume 1 of the *Tracts*, is also the subject of Keble's first tract, *Adherence to the Apostolical Succession the Safest Course*. It is the safest course because it is the most Scriptural: Christ himself instituted the succession at the Last Supper, so He is 'likely to be well pleased with those who do their best...to keep as near to His apostles as they can' (Keble (1838a), 4). Adherence to this succession is, in fact, not just safe, but essential, because only the Apostolic Church can truly administer the Sacraments. If ministers are not invested with Apostolic authority, they 'cannot be sure that [their] hands convey the [Eucharistic] sacrifice'; they cannot be sure that their parishioners are truly 'partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ' (2). Churchmen should, therefore, stop being 'cold and indifferent' to this doctrine, and should start boldly 'assert[ing] the authority of the Bishops and Pastors of the Church' (1, 5). They should also warn Dissenters of their error, impressing upon them the 'plain truth' that 'by separating themselves from our communion, they separate themselves...from THE ONLY CHURCH IN THIS REALM WHICH HAS A RIGHT TO BE QUITE SURE THAT SHE HAS THE LORD'S BODY TO GIVE TO HIS PEOPLE' (5).

The notes Keble sounds here echo throughout his other tracts. As he defended the Church's authority in Sacramental matters in *Tract no. 4*, he defends her authority in liturgical matters in *Tract no. 13*. Keble reminds those who would revise the Sunday Lessons in the Prayer Book, changing the selections from the Old Testament and adding selections from the New, that Archbishop Parker and others had 'some special rule of selection in their minds' when they arranged the lessons, and that the Church shows a certain 'wisdom and kindness' in 'ordering' certain passages to be read at certain times (Keble (1838c), 7, 8). It is, therefore, 'very improper to deal with them as if they had been taken at random, or might fitly be changed at will', and Keble warns that

any such changes would not be beneficial, but would rather be unwarranted concessions to an 'irreverent presumptuous age' (7, 11).

The subjects of the four saint's day sermons lend themselves to additional calls for 'Adherence to the Apostolical Succession'. The last of the four – Number 60, for St Philip and St James – does not explicitly mention the Succession, but it does call for proper regard for the Apostles from whom it derives. Keble's text is I Cor. 16. 21 – 'If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema' (Keble (1839i), 1). He argues that the love Paul has in mind is not just warm feelings or 'sincerity of heart', but also adherence to the doctrines 'first preached by the Apostles' (5). If anyone were to 'swerve from [this] platform of Apostolical doctrine', he would, Keble says, be subject to the 'Apostolic censure' mentioned in his text (5).

The other three sermons deal more explicitly with the Apostolic Succession itself. In the first, for St Matthias' Day, Keble asserts that Jesus 'purposely abstained from nominating St Matthias [as Judas' successor] in His life-time, in order that Christians in all times might understand that the ordained successors of the Apostles are as truly Bishops under Him, as ever the Apostles were themselves' (Keble (1839g), 3). The second sermon commemorates 'the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary', but Keble's thoughts quickly move from Mary's annunciation to Christ's incarnation, a doctrine which owes its preservation over the centuries 'to the chain of rightly-ordained Bishops, connecting our times with the time of its first promulgation' (Keble (1839h), 3). This is the case, in fact, with all matters of the faith, for a close 'connexion naturally subsists between sound doctrine and apostolical succession in the ministry' (11). Finally, the link between doctrine and the apostolic system is also the focus of the sermon for St Mark's Day. The text is Ephesians 4. 14, 'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Keble (1839j), 1). Many winds – Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Unitarian, Rationalist, Latitudinarian, even Roman – were blowing in Keble's day, and he traces them all to a single source: disparaging of 'the heavenly gifts, conveyed to us by the SPIRIT OF CHRIST through His Apostles', whom He had commissioned to safeguard 'the foundations of our faith' and to see that 'unity of doctrine' was preserved (2, 3, 14).

Dissent and the Sacraments are also the focus of Number 40, the third of the 'Richard Nelson' tracts.<sup>3</sup> Nelson is troubled because his nephew, Philip Carey, wishes to marry a woman who has never been baptized into the Church of England. Concerned that the 'Church's blessing' cannot 'go along with such an union' (Keble (1838b), 3), Nelson does everything he can to prevent, or at least delay, the wedding. After he finds Philip and the woman's father unreceptive to his warnings about 'the sin and the peril' of living outside of 'Christian marriage', he calls on Philip's mother and tries to convince her that

'wilfully to remain unbaptized is a more grievous sin than the generality of Dissenters... imagine' (5, 10). He even talks with the young woman herself, warning her that if she were to die in her unbaptized state, she would be denied a Christian burial because she had not 'entered into the Church and Kingdom of God' (13). The narrator 'heartily approve[s] of [Nelson's] principles' and ends the conversation by assuring him that his efforts to uphold the Church's authority will not be in vain. 'Take this Scripture home for your comfort', he says, 'that if a man humbly "cast his bread upon the waters," – if he trust his Maker with it in earnest, he shall "find it after many days"' (4, 15).

Keble takes a somewhat different, but no less Tractarian, approach in his last tract, Number 89, *On the Mysticism Attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church*. As the title indicates, the issue here is hermeneutics, not the Sacraments, the liturgy, or Dissent, and the authorities to whom he refers are not the Apostles, but the men of the early Patristic Age who interpreted their teaching. The form of this *Tract* is very different from the others as well. The earlier tracts were short; *No. 89* runs to 186 pages. The earlier ones, with the exception of *No. 52*, are addressed *Ad Populum*; *No. 89* is written for the clergy. In keeping with their intended audiences, the style and argument of the earlier tracts are relatively simple and straightforward, referring often to the Scriptures but assuming little knowledge of biblical languages or early Church authorities. *Tract no. 89*, on the other hand, presents a complex scholarly argument that the Victorian layman probably would not have found accessible. It consists of seven major sections, each of which is further broken down into between 10 and 29 subdivisions. As the subject matter demands, Keble frequently draws upon the works of a long list of the Fathers – Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Jerome, Justin, Origen and Tertullian; his quotes from these figures and the Bible often appear, with no translation provided, in the original Latin and Greek.

In this *Tract*, Keble examines the current notion that 'the Fathers were Mystics, and need not be regarded at all' (Keble (1841), 3). The first half of the phrase is certainly true, as we see in Keble's many examples of symbolic or allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures and the natural world. Some, such as the view that both the sun and the ram Abraham sacrificed in Isaac's place are types of Christ (60, 155), are familiar and straightforward, and therefore rather unobjectionable. Others, however, like Augustine's assertion that 'the five loaves' Jesus multiplied 'are understood to be the five books of Moses' or the idea that 'every rod ... or staff, or sceptre' mentioned in the Old Testament is 'a designed emblem of the Cross' (24, 121), may seem overly imaginative or somewhat forced. One of the more extreme examples of mystical interpretation, which Keble himself admits may seem 'extravagant' to many of his readers, is a Christological interpretation of 318, the number of men Abraham circumcised

in Genesis 17. According to an ancient commentary, Abraham performed 'a spiritual and typical action', for the letters that correspond to the ten and the eight are 'a cypher of the sacred Name', while Tau, the alphabetical symbol for 300, is a symbol of the Cross (17–18).

Keble's quarrel, then, is with the second half of the phrase, the idea that the Fathers 'need not be regarded at all' (3). Many saw their interpretations as fanciful, even fraudulent, but Keble regards their approach as perfectly valid – more valid, in fact, than the hermeneutics of his own day. It is valid, Keble asserts, because the mystical method of interpretation 'would appear to be amply authorized by the Scripture itself', and the Fathers are able to suggest symbolic or allegorical readings without doing violence to the 'historical and literal meaning' of the texts (70, 131). The problem, therefore, is not with the early centuries, but rather with the nineteenth. Too many Victorians, Keble asserts, showed a 'want of steady attention and reverential industry' in spiritual matters; when they did study the Scriptures, they were so enamored with 'common sense and practical utility' that they had become blind to the spiritual realities hidden there (4, 39). If his readers would see the sacred texts as the Fathers saw them, they might realize that interpretations 'which might seem at first glance overstrained, fantastic, or unnatural, might turn out in the end to be portions of true Christian wisdom' (6). In short, Keble argues that 'we have much more to learn from the Fathers, than to apologize for in them'; when it comes to biblical interpretation, it is 'at least possible... that the ancients may have been in the right, and we in the wrong' (10, 72).

Much of what I have suggested about Keble's *Tracts for the Times* can also be said of his *Plain Sermons*. The form of the sermons is more homogenous than that of the tracts – they are all six- to ten-page pastoral orations/essays – but they exhibit a similar variety of content. His one hundred and thirty-nine discourses were preached on many different occasions, they are drawn from texts from throughout the Old and New Testaments and they address subjects ranging from biblical characters to the Apostles and martyrs to the final judgment and the Last Days.

The sermons also deal with the same doctrines Keble emphasizes in his tracts. References to the Apostolic Succession appear in several of the sermons, and a passage in one entitled 'Christian Ministers, Tokens of Christ's Presence' sounds as if it could have come directly from *Tract no. 4*. 'Our spiritual life', Keble writes, 'entirely depends on a real, though mysterious, union with [Christ]; to which union the ministration of the Apostles, or of others ordained through them, is, ordinarily speaking, quite necessary' (Keble (1840a), 126). He places a similar emphasis on the Sacraments, asserting that baptism conveys 'Regeneration, Justification, [and] the beginning of Sanctification' and warning that a man who 'thinks he can do well enough without' the Eucharist 'must make up his mind to stav out of Heaven also' (Keble (1842e), 45; (1839b), 98).

If the Church's ministers and Sacraments are to be upheld, it follows that dissent from the Church must also be rejected. Keble offers such rejections in *Tracts nos. 4, 40 and 57*, and in two sermons in Volumes I and II. In 'The Unity of the Spirit', he exhorts his congregation to 'keep the Unity of the Spirit by means of [the] bond of peace' and asserts that 'one especial curse of the Antichristian power... is continual division and separation of what else was united' (Keble (1839I), 206, 208). He echoes this theme in 'The World's Conduct to the Man of Sorrows' when he speaks out against what he calls the 'very dangerous' notion that 'people may choose their own religion according to their own fancy of what will most edify themselves, and the consequent practice of running after strange teachers, without regard or reverence to the warnings of the Church' (Keble (1840e), 64).

Finally, Keble practices in his sermons the 'mystical' method of interpretation he defended in *Tract no. 89*. In 'Christian Uprising', he writes that 'If Christians would but observe what they read or hear in the Bible, and what they experience in life... they would find that the whole world around them is... full of divine tokens; every thing almost would put them in mind, more or less directly, of JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR, and they would see that GOD meant it so to do' (Keble (1844d), 92). Many of his sermons, accordingly, contain typological readings of the Scriptures and the present day. When he looks into the Old Testament, he sees that Moses and David are forerunners of Christ; that the parting of the Red Sea and the lavers in the Tabernacle prefigure Christian baptism; and that 'Circumcision among GOD's ancient people' is a type of the cross of self-denial that all Christians are called to bear (Keble (1844f), 49; (1839a), 261; (1840c), 93; (1842c), 138; (1844e), 10). When he turns his attention to the New, he makes Paul out to be 'a Type, of the Church or Kingdom of CHRIST in *action and warfare*' and every mention of 'bread corn' in the Gospels and Epistles 'a token of something relating to the kingdom of heaven' (Keble (1839k), 249; (1844a), 28). Types can even be found in the world outside the Bible: in an interesting reversal of chronology, Keble places a type later in time than the thing it signifies, stating that the 'Bishops are living types of [Christ's] priestly and pastoral care' (Keble (1839d), 243).

This is not to suggest, however, that the *Plain Sermons* are simply tracts published under other names. Generally speaking, the tracts are addressed to the intellect; they answer the question 'What am I to believe?' The sermons, on the other hand, appeal to the will; they answer the question 'What am I to do?' When Keble addresses matters of doctrine, liturgy, or hermeneutics, his concern is therefore not with the reasons *why* something is true, but rather with how people are to behave *because* it is true. Because the Apostolic Succession is the foundation of the Church, Christians are to pray for and obey 'those whom the HOLY GHOST has set over [them], to be Bishops and

Priests among His people' (Keble (1842b), 295). Because the lessons in the Prayer Book have been arranged and preserved by God, they should listen to the Church when she uses the Book to speak 'a word of comfort or censure, of warning or encouragement' (Keble (1844a), 28). Because 'riches and good things here are but shadows, or tokens, or types of the true', Christians should leave lives of faithful stewardship, making 'up [their] minds to consider none of them as being properly [their] own' (Keble (1846e), 146).

The contrast between the tracts and the sermons is further enhanced by the fact that statements such as these are in the minority; most of the practical applications Keble suggests are not directly tied to a tenet of Anglo-Catholic doctrine. These applications address nearly every aspect of the Christian life: repentance when necessary, followed by obedience, self-denial, reverence, reflection and meditation, prayer and devotion, thankfulness, humility, patience, perseverance and preparation for the last days. They are often stated in rather general terms, which is probably fitting; specific instructions may not be equally relevant to every member of the congregation, so Keble leaves it up to each person to find a way to adapt his exhortations to his or her own life. Some are, however, quite specific. Keble doesn't merely suggest, for example, that people 'pray to God *regularly*' (Keble (1839f), 73); he suggests that they pray at least twice a day, morning and evening, in a place specifically suited to the purpose (Keble (1839e), 79).

Keble often makes his applications more concrete by holding up biblical characters as examples of behavior to be emulated or eschewed. Jesus is, of course, the ultimate positive rôle model, and His followers should strive to follow His example of engaging in 'active practical duties by day, and earnest devotion and meditation by night' (Keble (1846a), 52). Others include Mary, with her remarkable ability to bear tremendous pain; John, a model of 'amiable modesty' and an 'affectionate and teachable mind'; and Joseph, whose prompt action in fleeing to Egypt with the infant Christ teaches us '*Never to put by GOD's warnings, but to act on them, in dutiful Faith, immediately*' (Keble (1844i), 81; (1840d), 289, 90; (1846c), 292). Christians should, Keble says, be like these men and women, and not like Ahab, who was guilty of 'rash impiety'; Pharaoh, who was 'apt to deal lightly with GOD's warnings'; or Judas, who embodies the disasters that can befall when hearts 'grow incurably hard' (Keble (1839c), 198; (1844f), 56; (1844g), 47).

Some of the characters Keble mentions are at least as instructive as examples as they were as types. It is interesting, and perhaps somewhat edifying, to see David as a type of Christ, but people are more likely to change for the better if they also learn, as he did, to truly repent and be restored (Keble (1842a), 153). Similarly, people may grow in contemplation by thinking about how Moses functions as 'a figure of the Law', but they will advance in holiness by emulating his 'loyal and devout spirit' (Keble (1840b), 119; (1846d), 175).

The typological character whom Keble invokes most often as a rôle model is the Apostle Paul. Not only is he an emblem 'of the Church or Kingdom of Christ in *action* and *warfare*', but he is also an exemplar of reverence, contentment, 'firmness, wisdom, courage, self-denial', and self-control (Keble (1844a), 23, 26, 28; (1844j), 210; (1846b), 27). Paul was unusual, to be sure, but he need not be unique. Keble notes that 'if there be any truth in the Bible, it is in the power of every one of us...to be like St Paul, if he will', and he echoes Paul's own words in I Corinthians 11. 1, exhorting his parishioners to 'be followers of St. Paul, as he was of Christ' (Keble (1844c), 279; (1844h), 71).

Keble's sermons, in short, are 'what his favourite Bishop Wilson said sermons should be, "pious instructions to lead men to heaven and save them from hell"' (Lock, 193). They are, moreover, instructions for *all* people, not just those of a particular faction or party. His denominational allegiances were explicit in the *Tracts*, but they tend to remain in the background of the *Sermons*; most of what he says is palatable not only to those affiliated with the Movement, but to believers of all persuasions. Keble's concern, in other words, is that those who hear or read his sermons become not better Tractarians, or even better Anglicans, but simply better Christians.

What is to be gained from a new consideration of Keble's prose such as the one I have suggested here? Additional study of the *Tracts for the Times* needs little justification. They are, after all, the flagship publications of the Anglo-Catholic revival, and our understanding of this revival cannot be complete without the fullest possible grasp of the texts that gave Tractarianism its name. More of a case may need to be made, however, for a study of Keble's sermons, which received little attention when they were first published and have remained largely unstudied for over one hundred and fifty years. I believe there is much to be gained from such a study. Work on the *Plain Sermons* and other addresses can enlarge our understanding of a range of subjects: Keble's hermeneutic and rhetorical strategies, his doctrinal and political views, his approach to parochial work and the cure of souls. They can profitably be studied in their own right, and fruitful comparisons can also be made to his *Tracts for the Times*, the *Letters of Spiritual Counsel and Guidance*, and *The Christian Year*.

Study of the sermons can also help to illuminate an important but too-often overlooked aspect of the Oxford Movement. In 1891, R.W.Church asserted that 'the Tracts were not the most powerful instruments in drawing sympathy to the movement... While men were reading and talking about the Tracts, they were hearing the sermons; and in the sermons they heard the living meaning, and reason, and bearing of the Tracts, their ethical affinities, their moral standard' (Church, 92-93). He was referring specifically to Newman's sermons at St Mary's, but his statement is equally applicable to

Keble's preaching. More recent scholars have echoed Church's views. F. L. Cross, for example, has stated that 'the story of [the sermons] is largely the story of the Revival', and Geoffrey Rowell has called Tractarianism not only 'a great revival of sacramental religion', but 'a great preaching movement' as well (Cross, 8; Rowell, 32). The preaching of the Oxford Movement has been briefly mentioned, but its significance has not been fully developed. There is an immense body of scholarship on the Movement, but only a handful of studies, such as Ronald McKinney's 'Preaching within the Oxford Movement' (*Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, 1985) and Cross' *Preaching in the Anglo-Catholic Revival* (SPCK, 1933), are specifically devoted to the Tractarians' pulpit work.

Much study, then, remains to be done. With nearly three hundred and fifty sermons by seven authors of the *Tracts for the Times*,<sup>4</sup> the *Plain Sermons* are an excellent place to begin a reconsideration not only of Keble's preaching, but of the homiletics of the Oxford Movement as a whole. The time has come to devote further scholarly attention to these important but nearly forgotten documents.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For the importance of the application in Victorian homiletics, see Ellison 18–19, 24. Keble's insistence upon it appears throughout his sermons, in statements such as 'the faith which is to justify and save us must run through our whole conduct' and 'Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is their Pastor's business to urge on them the truth, and their duties; it is their brethren's business, by practising the duties, to show that they believe the Truth' (Keble (1842f), 287; Keble (1844b), 62).

<sup>2</sup> Church-State matters are not entirely absent from the *Plain Sermons*. One takes the funeral of William IV as an occasion for reflecting upon the duties Churchmen 'owe to kings and princes' (Keble (1842d), 72). Another, entitled 'Kings to be Honoured for their Office' Sake', offers much the same argument as 'National Apostasy': Christians must try to advance the government's 'peace, prosperity, and welfare' even when it is guilty of 'encroachments' against the Church (Keble (1839d), 240). Statements like this, however, are relatively rare; a study of the rest of the *Sermons* shows that such issues are not Keble's primary concern.

<sup>3</sup> The first two 'Richard Nelson' *Tracts* (nos. 12 and 22) were written by Keble's brother Thomas. They record conversations that Nelson and the unnamed narrator have on key Tractarian themes such as apostolic succession and the dangers of making unwise alterations to the liturgy and Prayer Book.

<sup>4</sup> With 139 sermons, Keble was by far the most prolific contributor, followed by Isaac Williams (78), Thomas Keble (55), John Henry Newman (36) and E. B. Pusey (20). Robert Francis Wilson and Sir George Prevost had very limited involvement with both projects. Wilson wrote *Tract no. 51* and 7 *Plain Sermons*, Prevost the conclusion to *Tract no. 84* and 12 *Plain Sermons*.

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## 7

## LYRA INNOCENTIUM (1846) AND ITS CONTEXTS

J. R. Watson

When Keble said that 'if the Church of England were to fail altogether yet it would be found in my parish' (Battiscombe, 303), he was referring to a way of life that he had struggled to maintain since his appointment to Hursley in 1836. One of the principal features of that way of life was the attention given to children in church and in school. In church they were baptised, confirmed, and taught in the Sunday school. In the day school, the vicar himself taught for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. He is known to have taken a great interest in the bringing up of children, though childless himself, and to have expected from them respect, if not affection: 'I like them very much', he is reported as saying, 'if they would only like me; but they always do much better so long as they are under my wife' (Battiscombe, 178).

The teaching at Hursley, like everything else there, must be seen in a national context, even if it was often at odds with it. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Church of England had become increasingly concerned with the education of children, both in terms of weekday education and of Sunday schools. Education was seen as necessary to guard against infidelity and social unrest, and to provide the nation with future church-going and respectable citizens, who would be taught to respect others, understand the needs of society, and know the Bible. The importance of religious and civil education was brought to the attention of the Church by discontent and unrest, particularly the Chartist riots of 1839 and 1840, and again in 1842. One answer to such uncomfortable manifestations of disaffection was perceived to be education; but there were widely-differing views about how this was to be implemented. The British and Foreign Schools Society, founded in 1814, existed to promote a general education, without specific religious ties; the Nationa