

INTRODUCTION

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Writing in the 1930s, in one of the first twentieth-century biographies of John Keble, Kenneth Ingram looked forward prophetically to Keble's reputation in the modern age:

They will either despise him as a man who worried intensely over technical issues which have no significance outside a narrow ecclesiastical sphere, or else they will pay him a romantic sentimental veneration, a devotion which is far too uncritical to have any relation to actual realities. (Ingram, 153)

With a few exceptions, Ingram's comment has been borne out by the historiography and literary criticism of Keble's life and works. There has been a dual tendency either to damn Keble with faint praise, recognising his strong beliefs while deprecating their objects, or to write a form of hagiography, glorifying his achievements for Anglicanism. One of the most significant twentieth-century works on Keble, for instance, Georgina Battiscombe's 1963 biography, is entitled *John Keble: A Study in Limitations*. While she acknowledges that some of Keble's 'limitations' – his conservatism, his traditionalism, his reluctance to engage with points of view opposite to his own – might have served as strengths, she also sees them as relegating him to lesser importance: her book describes someone who could have been great, had he not been so circumscribed by family, background and tradition (Battiscombe, *xviii–xix*). Owen Chadwick, in a review of Battiscombe's biography, took issue with this general predilection to criticize Keble for his failure to step forward as the true leader of the Oxford Movement:

We must take Keble for himself, and not as a man unfitted to do what he is supposed to have done but never did. (Chadwick, 55)

This is a salutary warning, and one that has not always been heeded by critics and historians. Even when defending him and arguing for his significance, many writers have felt obliged to apologize for or castigate Keble for his arch-conservatism, his social views which were 'centuries out of date', and his backward ideas about poetry (Edgecombe, 55). To take only a small example of the latter, Sheridan Gilley, in an otherwise excellent article on Tractarian aesthetics, notes that the rhythm of Keble's poetry 'lacks the true romantic freedom', a comment which seems to define all poetry of the period which was not 'romantic' as false, and which implicitly assumes that Keble would or should have wanted to write like a Romantic poet (235). Much of this kind of criticism might be said to stem from two basic exasperations: firstly, that Keble, despite his popularity and prominence at the time, failed to produce the kind of work which would give him literary and political credibility in the next two centuries, and secondly, more specifically, that he failed to be John Henry Newman. This exasperation mirrors Newman's own. As he once complained to Pusey about Keble's poetic abilities, '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?' (Rowell, 40). The disgust here can, of course, also be read as Newman's testimony to Keble's considerable poetic powers.

In his important essay on Keble, Newman combined praise of his talents with a certain amount of frustration, thus setting the stage for twentieth-century discussion. Even Chadwick, in defending Keble's limitations, heightens or exaggerates them, again with reference to Newman: 'Keble set Newman to work, but only as the perception of a sublime picture drives the apprehender to start painting' (55). To use the analogy of a painting implies that Keble was passive, static and fixed, rather than being dynamically involved in the literature, politics and religion of the period. It does not give any indication that Keble and Newman might have interacted as equals, forming their ideas through negotiation with each other and their wider circle. Yet if ultimately Newman has been judged as more significant to the literature and culture of the nineteenth century, it is far from clear that this was evident to him and his contemporaries at the time.

Despite the valuable work that has been done on Keble in the four decades since Battiscombe's biography, the view that Keble is essentially a minor figure, more significant in his failings than in his successes, still lingers. One of the aims of this volume is to challenge this view, by focusing predominantly on Keble's strengths, on what he represented, what he achieved, and how his achievements shaped his period. In understanding how Keble's life and work influenced his time, in ways which we have not fully appreciated, it is necessary to consider all facets of this work, and to think of Keble not primarily as a religious thinker, nor as a political thinker, nor as a poet alone, but as a

combination of all these. Of course, for Keble there was no clear division between politics, religion and aesthetics. Peter Nockles comments that Keble and Newman 'would foresee and brand as "apostasy" our modern preoccupation with politics', recognising but deploring the increasing separation of sacred and secular affairs, which from their perspective should have been irretrievably linked (Nockles, 68). Similarly, Tractarian belief in 'the joint and mutually reinforcing activity of both religion and art' was fostered largely by Keble, and went on to colour the thinking of the next generation of artists and writers on Christianity (Tennyson, 23). The interdisciplinary nature of this volume, which contains essays by historians, theologians and literary critics, thus mirrors the interdisciplinarity of Keble's own writings. As the title, *John Keble in Context*, suggests, the contributors set out both to show how Keble's 'influence', a key word for discussions of his significance, acted on his historical, literary, political and theological contexts, and how his thoughts in turn were shaped by the contexts in which he wrote.

The facts of Keble's life, of who and what he was, are relatively straightforward, and on first glance unprepossessing. Born in Gloucestershire to a clergyman father, from a family of minor gentry, Keble grew up as part of a closely-knit family. He was educated at home, and demonstrated the value of this education when he won a scholarship to Corpus Christi College, Oxford in 1806, at the age of fourteen, following this up with a spectacular Double First and a Fellowship at Oriel College. Keble remained in Oxford as a College Tutor until 1823, when he made the decision to accept a curacy at Southrop, near his home town, and devote himself to parish duties and to the care of his elderly father and sisters. In 1825, shortly after he had found a niche for himself by starting a new post as the curate of Hursley, near Winchester, the death of his younger sister meant that he had again to return to the family home and assume the role of primary carer. It was at this point that he published his first volume of devotional verse, *The Christian Year*. Keble remained involved with Oxford affairs and was elected Professor of Poetry in 1832, which required him to give a series of Latin lectures, but fundamentally he remained at home until 1835, when his father's death freed him to take up the Hursley living again. Now married to his sister-in-law, Charlotte Clarke, he was the vicar of Hursley for three decades until his death in 1866.

It is easy to see why these facts seem to suggest a life of early promise which was then thrown away. But an alternative reading of Keble's life would cast him in quite a different light, pointing to his almost legendary status as a young graduate in Oxford: his reconception of the pastoral role of an Oxford tutor (which was to have significant impact on the drive to reform Oxford throughout the century), his influence over a group of young men, including Thomas Arnold, Edward Pusey, Hurrell Froude, Robert Wilberforce and John

Henry Newman, who were between them to have an immense effect on the Anglican Church and on Victorian society as a whole, and his constant and decisive involvement in debates which were shaking the foundations of Church and State. Keble's life as a country parson, moreover, was neither a defeat nor a withdrawal. Although he reputedly went through periods of doubt and despair (Newman censored all mentions of such moods when editing his letters), Keble never seems fundamentally to have questioned where his duties and inclinations lay, and always intended and indeed aspired to become a parish priest. Raymond Chapman has succinctly argued that 'Keble's success came from a full use of the opportunities which a country parish offered' (60), and in order to appreciate this it is necessary to see Hursley as one of the centres, the powerhouses, of the Oxford Movement, rather than marginal or at the periphery: a place where ideas were discussed and finessed, where Keble received constant streams of visitors, and from where he sent streams of letters, a place where his activities of writing, socializing, parish work and church-building created a community that, as J. R. Watson reminds us in this volume, was the ideal of the Church of England in miniature. From Hursley, Keble's influence expanded outwards to affect those who met and talked with him or were in some way allied with this community – Charlotte Yonge and her circle, as Ellen Jordan, Charlotte Mitchell and Helen Schinske note, provide a good example – and also those who only knew of Hursley second-hand, as the parish inhabited, or ruled, by one of the most famous personalities of the nineteenth century.

One reason why Keble's effect on his generation (and the succeeding generation) may have been underestimated is because so much of his influence, according to contemporary sources, depended on personality, and on private letters and conversations which have not been preserved. Keble did not always convert or convince through intellectual assent to his published works, but through feeling, through the affective force of his character – as in the well-known anecdote, reported by Pusey, of a waverer who was reassured in his Anglican beliefs simply by staying in Hursley for a fortnight. 'Keble did not say a word of controversy, but loved', Pusey told someone who enquired how this feat had been achieved (quoted in Griffin, 20). Many accounts attest to Keble's power of personality in terms which emphasize 'the vast *force* there was' behind his evident humility.¹ Contemporary writers had no doubt that this force existed: as Henry Wilberforce wrote to a friend about Thomas Arnold, 'I have heard that he expresses a *very low opinion of Keble's power!!!*' (Newsome, 165). This is intellectual power, intelligence, power of dispute, but also more generally power to shape and to convince. For Wilberforce, Arnold's denial of this was the final straw which demonstrated the ludicrousness of his position.

One obituary, in the *Literary Churchman*, notes that Keble possessed:

peculiar presence...so plain and simple, and yet so strong, it had a grasp upon you which you felt as if you could not shake off or trifle with: – so quiet, so unobtrusive, so self-repressing, and yet, for all its self-repression, overflowing upon you, and influencing, and moulding you, as if by some subtle law of spiritual force.²

The language used here picks up on imagery (of flow, contained feeling, streams of influence) common in Keble's own poetry and prose. This is a striking account, which makes the most of the disparity between Keble's outward persona of a quiet, selfless, English country clergyman and the personality which infused that role with significance. As later writers have noted, it was precisely this disparity which caused him to seem such a significant figure for his century. Ingram sums this up nicely:

The very characteristics which, as he would have maintained, made him unsuitable for a leader made him a leader. His stability, his humility, his disinclination to court publicity and prominence, secured his position. (98–9)

In other words, Keble is not a prominent figure despite his refusal to lead the Oxford Movement and engage fully in its affairs, but because of this. His physical, geographical removal from the scene of the fiercest debates, and his primary concentration on parish life in the countryside, meant that he could provide a model for men and women who were not necessarily in sympathy with the aims of the movement he had helped to create. Keble was described in his lifetime and in obituaries as the epitome of a key aspect of the Victorian Dream, quietly and lovingly fulfilling all duties to family and neighbours in the sphere in which he had been placed; helping the poor and needy; devoting his life to what he himself famously described as 'the trival round, the common task' ('Morning', *The Christian Year*, l. 52); serving God, the English countryside and the established Church. Twenty-first century readers may not be particularly moved by Wordsworth's emotive evocation of 'those little, nameless, unremembered acts/ Of kindness and of love', and are inclined to feel frustration that George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke abandons her early ideal of founding a new community in favour of subsuming her life in another and working to influence politics through personality, yet there is no denying the attraction these renunciations held for nineteenth-century readers ('Tintern Abbey', lines 35–6; Eliot *passim*). Reading Keble's influence in this light, it is perhaps less anomalous that the *Oxford Undergraduate's Journal* should have declared in 1866 that:

The real truth seems to be that of the three leading men who worked

together in the Oxford Movement, Mr Keble is the one whose influence has been the greatest.³

Such discussion of personal influence might again make it seem that Keble was innocently unconscious of his potential, a passive participant in the creation of his own image, and in the dissemination of his ideas. Yet clearly his choice to assume George Herbert's mantle as the epitome of the English country pastor was conscious, deliberate, and deeply political, suggesting at least one version of where Anglicanism should find its strengths and achievements. An example of this is provided by a series of articles apparently written by Keble for *The Penny Post*, in which a group of village inhabitants, comprising the schoolmaster, the minister, a saddler and his wife, consider various church issues through dialogues.⁴ The didacticism and strong sense of natural class-divisions, and the emphasis on the honest workman, earnestly seeking to become a better Christian, now make these conversations seem highly implausible, but they do suggest a model in which all classes in a community will help each other to further their understanding of Christian, or rather Anglican, truths. This series of forgotten articles, as much as more famous works, highlights Keble's steady conservatism, and his refusal to countenance (or even to imagine) deviation from his principles. As he protested in the Assize Sermon of 1833, 'Under the guise of charity and toleration we are come almost to this pass; that no difference, in matters of faith, is to disqualify for our approbation and confidence, whether in public or domestic life' (Keble (1983), 18). This rejection of toleration and deliberate attempt to exclude Dissenters, Roman Catholics and non-Christians is another of the main reasons why Keble now seems outdated, embarrassingly un-PC, but it is worth noting firstly, that as several contributors to this volume show, conservatism could sometimes lead to almost revolutionary and forward-looking policies, and secondly, that it was precisely through his refusal to countenance alternatives to one doctrine that Keble came to wield what power he had, and to ensure his community and communion would last. Whether or not Hursley actually resembled the orderly society of the *Penny Post* dialogues, it was the best forum for his beliefs, and perhaps the only one in which they could have been exercised to such effect.

Battiscombe has noted that in Oxford in the early 1820s there was already a strong perception that 'if ever there should be an occasion for taking sides the side which secured Keble's support would be in possession of a very considerable asset' (48). This held true throughout Keble's career. His involvement in the world of action and enterprise demonstrated that he made a valuable contribution to any cause whether or not he was directly engaged in debate. His participation in *Tracts for the Times*, for instance, though it caused less furore than that of Newman or Isaac Williams, helped to give the

nascent Oxford Movement credibility and authority, given that he had been a respected Oxford figure for some years before the other main participants in the Movement arrived. Through his sermons, as Robert Ellison and others remind us, he reached a large audience of Oxford men, and when those sermons were published, a wide readership throughout the country. He was a regular contributor to periodicals, producing articles and reviews which frequently dealt extensively with vital political and theological issues: the question of disestablishment, as Simon Skinner notes, is a case in point. Later in his life, when the causes for which he had fought seemed to be waning, Keble's support for far-reaching projects, such as the Universities Mission to Central Africa, or his opposition, as in the Gorham judgement or the Matrimonial Causes Bill, still gave a boost to any campaign.⁵ Even when he was not active in a cause, his allegiance to it, his name on a petition or letter, was of value. In addition, of course, Keble wrote and published a series of important scholarly and literary works, including a major and well-respected edition of Hooker, his lectures as Oxford Professor of Poetry, published in 1844 as *De poeticae vi medica*, and his poems themselves, including *The Christian Year* and its successor, *Lyra Innocentium*.

As this volume amply demonstrates, Keble's writings as a whole deserve serious study and re-evaluation, in order to show how they acted as key interventions in concerns of the day. Perhaps ironically, a possible explanation as to why his writings have seldom been accorded this value is because they were cast into the shade from the outset by the immense success of *The Christian Year*, and the subsequent focus on Keble as poet. One historian of Tractarianism writes that:

Keble alone [i.e. without Newman, Froude and Pusey] would have been a Conservative county clergyman who wrote pleasing religious verse and came up to Oxford to vote against every reform. (Dawson, 12)

While this may be true with regard to Keble's political commitment, *The Christian Year*, placed in context, can hardly be dismissed as 'pleasing religious verse'. It made Keble into a celebrity author – as Watson trenchantly remarks, the initials 'J.K., Hursley' were 'the most famous initials and parish in early Victorian religion' – and he would have been known for it in his time even if the Oxford Movement, which did not begin to gain momentum until at least six years after its publication, had not existed.⁶ Keble's volume of devotional poetry, designed as a companion text to the Book of Common Prayer, achieved a success he could never have predicted and was read in contexts which he could not have foreseen, and would not, in many cases, have welcomed. As an awareness of this success lurks behind many comments made in this volume, it is worth briefly noting some of its characteristics.

Looking back in the 1860s, the *Times* reported that the impact of *The Christian Year* on young men and women in the 1830s could be described as 'a positive possession', terms which suggest a kind of madness, and which imply that his poems materially worked on their readers, in the same way that his personality was said to work, seizing and changing them.⁷ *The Christian Year's* near-legendary status as a publishing and reading phenomenon is attested to by the sheer number of anecdotes and accounts circulating about it in Victorian culture. A. P. Stanley, for example, reported that when four British travellers met on a Sunday in the Mount Sinai desert, three of them had brought *The Christian Year* (Stanley, 456). A minor Oxfordshire poet, J. M. Chapman, narrates this story, apparently from his own experience, in his ode to Keble:

Three faithful friends, all lovers of their Church,
Set forth to travel, and for health to search;
Before they start, they all agreement make
One favourite author each should with him take;
A rest-day come, at breakfast all appear
Each with his chosen book – 'The Christian Year'. (Chapman (1875), 14)

The anecdote is satisfying because we can so clearly predict the denouement. The appeal of *The Christian Year* stretched to America, where Keble's name was, according to the Bishop of New York, 'a favourite throughout our American Church'.⁸ It also crossed denominations in England. In a sermon preached on Keble's death, one Dissenting minister forgave him his High-Church heresies on the grounds that *The Christian Year* demonstrated his true spirit:

Many Dissenters praise the book, notwithstanding its High-church character. My ministerial acquaintance, almost to a man, speak of it as a beloved companion, and regard its author as one of their holiest helpers. (Williams, 12)

It was, moreover, allegedly read by all classes. In Margaret Oliphant's *Salem Chapel*, the wealthy young Lady Western buys handsome presentation copies for her parishioners in Masters, an upmarket Anglo-Catholic booksellers, but one writer in 1866 also assures us that 'you can go to any railway bookstall in the land and buy the 'Christian Year' for a shilling' (Oliphant, 61–3; Haws, 174). While it may seem discomfiting to a modern critic to envisage a traveller choosing to read *The Christian Year* over *The Woman in White* or *Lady Audley's Secret*, the fact remains that huge numbers of Victorian readers did choose to read, reread, and, crucially, to use Keble's poems, whether as consolation, panacea or religious aid.

The ubiquitous mentions of *The Christian Year* in contemporary letters, memoirs and fiction have ensured that it is the one book authored by Keble to have received significant critical attention after his death, albeit that this attention is generally focused on the volume's influence on the literature of a later generation rather than the contexts surrounding *The Christian Year* itself. Valuable work has been published on *The Christian Year* and Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Matthew Arnold, and to a lesser degree, Alfred Tennyson, Arthur Hugh Clough, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.⁹ In addition, attention to Keble's poetry has been backed up with attention to his statements on poetics, notably in his lectures as Oxford Professor of Poetry. These were rediscovered after M. H. Abrams praised them in *The Mirror and the Lamp* for their proto-Freudian emphasis on repression and sublimation (Abrams, 146–7; Shaw, 67). Later critics have expanded these ideas and have provided valuable accounts of how Keble's theories fit into a wider matrix of work on poetry and poetics in the period.¹⁰ His writings on art can seem surprisingly modern, in their insistence on reader response rather than authorial intention, their sense of the arbitrariness of language and the difficulties of expression, and their interest in theorizing affect. Moreover, Keble as poet and critic is important because, as noted earlier, his work ensured that it is difficult to consider Tractarian theories of religion and politics without taking aesthetics into account, and vice versa. As J. C. Shairp commented, 'he gave the Oxford Movement poetry, and a poetical aspect' (238). Such remarks point us towards a more general understanding of how literature and Christianity were inseparable in the writing and reading practices of many Victorians.

The recent publication of a number of books on Victorian literature, history and religion suggests that critics are coming to the realization that this field has been relatively neglected, and as Keble necessarily looms large in any consideration of nineteenth-century Christianity, it might be expected that his works will receive increasing attention.¹¹ As the reassessment of popular works of literature by 'minor' writers continues to gain force, the cultural map of Victorian England is being redrawn to take account of texts which are no longer canonical. In this light not only Keble himself, but many writers whom he influenced, are emerging as topics of study and debate. The essays in this volume by Emma Francis and Emma Mason provide a case in point, showing how new explorations in the field of women's poetry and women's writing have contributed to a new understanding of Keble's role, particularly with regard to notions of affective poetics. In studies based on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in addition, an interest in the discourse of emotion (a discourse of immense importance in Keble's writings and in Tractarian theory and practice), and in the ideological uses to which 'feeling'

could be put, has led to reconsiderations of Keble's views. Positioned as he is in the crucial decades between 'Romanticism' and 'Victorianism', with Wordsworth and Coleridge on the one hand, and Tennyson and Browning on the other, Keble's statements on the uneasy relation between emotion and its expression not only affected the Tractarian position on such concepts but also served as a model for ways in which literature and religion were to develop throughout the nineteenth century.

In seeking to engage with areas of study which are just opening up, and to suggest that Keble is a key figure in these areas, these essays necessarily set his works in context, whether that context is political, social, theological, literary, biographical or all of these together. Indeed, in several essays it is less his works themselves than the contexts in which they operated which provide the driving force of the argument. Stephen Prickett opens the volume by setting a precedent for the discussion of forgotten or neglected texts by Keble: in this case his Creweian Oration of 1839, delivered at the ceremony for Wordsworth's honorary degree. Those present, besides Wordsworth, included Newman, John Ruskin, and a young Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough (Gill, 19). Clearly this was an occasion of considerable significance. In retrieving the unpublished text of the speech, Prickett reveals that Keble's social vision may have been considerably more inclusive than it has seemed, as the oration points towards Keble's ideal of the university, and his hopes that the ideal could be extended through a wider educational network. In addition, Prickett's exposition of these views involves a broader reassessment of Keble's conservative attitudes to philanthropy and education, and to the concept of tradition itself, forcing us to question whether his allegiances were as straightforward as they may have seemed. The second essay, Simon Skinner's "'The duty of the state": Keble, the Tractarians, and establishment' also sets out to demolish the prevailing misconception that the Tractarians were uninterested in wider social questions, and deals with a crucial yet unremarked piece of writing by Keble, in this case his review of Gladstone's *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838) in *The British Critic*. Skinner concentrates on the contested issue of Tractarian attitudes to disestablishment, arguing that despite his heated comments of the 1830s Keble never seriously rejected the idea of establishment itself, but rather 'resisted establishment on its current terms', terms which seemed to him to deny the clear superiority of the Church to the state.

The importance of these issues in historical scholarship, and their contested nature, can be seen by comparing Skinner's essay with Mark Chapman's 'John Keble, 'National Apostasy', and the Myths of 14 July'. Chapman, in contrast to Skinner, sees Keble's most heated comments on disestablishment as representative. He suggests that Keble's famed Assize Sermon implied 'a

revolution in English political theory', precisely because it opened the door to disestablishment, and, while elaborating on Skinner's point that the doctrine of apostolicity meant that the Church was perceived as the superior party, argues that this doctrine also meant that the Church had an independent source of sovereignty, and could therefore survive alone. While he was never a conscious revolutionary, Keble, in this light, seems to have predicted the rise of pluralism. The fact that these two essays draw different conclusions from Keble's writing neatly demonstrates the complexity of Keble's negotiations with political and social ideas, and also shows the extent to which debate over his views is still very much an ongoing, vital concern for historians, given the implication of these views in the context of Church-State relations.

James Pereiro's 'Keble and the Concept of Ethos' might seem to move away from specific political and social debates to examine an ambiguous yet pervasive concept in Keble's writing and in Tractarianism as a whole. Yet the tenor of Keble's writings on *ethos*, as this essay decisively demonstrates, was strongly political in the widest sense of the word. Keble's use of *ethos* to indicate a certain mindset, a way of perceiving the world, gains its force, Pereiro argues, from Butler's *Analogy* and his argument that men could train themselves in virtue and thus develop what we might call a predilection for Christianity. The right *ethos*, comprising the right moral qualities and a dominant sense of truth and love, would directly lead to faith. The formation of this *ethos* then obviously becomes a crucial educational issue, on an individual and national level. Keble's laments about the state of the nation, in other words, are formulated as a sense that the dominant *ethos* of the country needs changed.

In the second part of the volume, the concern about the education and formation of a Christian, and about the Church's engagement with secular affairs, remains, although the focus shifts slightly towards investigations of Keble's place in the literature and culture of the period. William McKelvy turns to the reading culture of the day in his essay, 'Ways of Reading 1825: Leisure, Curiosity and Morbid Eagerness'. He argues persuasively that *The Christian Year* can be seen as an intervention in an ongoing debate about the purpose and value of reading. The clear designs that Keble's poems have on the reader should be seen in the context of this particular historical dispute. From this perspective, Keble's works, and those of other Tractarians, are attempts to uphold ideals of Christian reading, ideals increasingly challenged by secularism. Keble's tracts and sermons are obviously key reading material, and Robert Ellison gives a detailed account of their significance in the succeeding essay. In assessing these neglected prose writings, Ellison draws attention not simply to their content but to the significance of the tract and sermon genre, in relation to Tractarianism and as part of the wider publishing culture of the day.

J. R. Watson's essay is also concerned with how Keble's works were (and

are) read, and more particularly with the construction of a child reader, or with the construction of an adult reader for children's literature. Both of these concerns are currently under critical investigation in the field of children's literature, and Watson demonstrates that they were equally current in the early-mid nineteenth century. He concentrates on Keble's volume of lyrics about children, *Lyra Innocentium*, setting it in the context of writing for and about children and suggesting that the value of these poems lies in their involvement in a wider set of concerns about how children could be educated in the Church. What Watson, Ellison and McKelvy have in common with each other (and indeed with most of the essays in the volume) is a concern less for criteria of literary merit than for the effect Keble's writings had, their participation in a network of contemporary discourses. All three essays are concerned with how and why these particular texts were read, and in the case of sermons, delivered, and whether they proved formative in the ways in which their author intended. Reading becomes a means of forming *ethos*, and a way of converting readers to the desired belief or point of view. The writings of Keble discussed in this section are not merely representative, but given his fame and the dissemination of his influence, perhaps the most representative of certain genres of writing which set out with these aims.

The final part of the volume opens out Keble's literary influence, tracing it both in his times and through later decades in the work of a diverse group of writers. The first two essays, by Emma Francis and Emma Mason, provide a valuable assessment of where Keble's works can be placed with regard to the strong tradition of nineteenth-century women's poetry. In locating Keble as a major theorist of expressive poetry, a tradition associated with women's writing both in the nineteenth century and in current criticism, they not only suggest that he may have been substantially more important to female writers than has been previously thought, but also point towards innovative readings of Tractarianism in relation to gender issues. The only women writers usually discussed in relation to Keble are Christina Rossetti, whose interest in his work is unquestioned, and Charlotte Yonge – and as Ellen Jordan *et al.* remind us, commentary on Yonge has been limited in scope. To set Keble in the context of women's poetry in general, therefore, and to argue that his writings were 'profoundly enabling for the woman poet', significantly expands the genres in regard to which he can be read.

Francis provides an overview of current critical theories on nineteenth-century women's poetry, and then turns to nineteenth-century theorists to see how their work contributed to the classification of women's poetry as expressive. Rather than positing a direct link between Keble and theorists of women's poetry such as M. A. Stodart, she sees Keble's lectures on poetry as a general contribution to the expressive tradition, a contribution which later writers would necessarily have taken into account. As both she and Mason

note, the points of resemblance between Keble's poetic theories and commentaries on women's writing meant that they had immediate and personal application for female poets. Mason's essay takes these ideas and applies them specifically to poets such as Cecil Frances Alexander, Dora Greenwell and Adelaide Procter, all of whom had strong interests in Anglo-Catholicism. She argues that Keble's ideas about feeling and its containment are directly reflected in poetry which dwells on silence, reserve and regulated feeling, both in form and in content.

The next two essays turn to Keble's effect on his male successors. Daniel Kline continues the effort to extend Keble's influence into new intellectual and cultural contexts by demonstrating that his writings were operating as an influence not only in the sympathetic environment of Oxford, but in the somewhat hostile arena of Thomas Arnold's Rugby College, where the young poets Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold formed their poetics in negotiation with Keble's model. Arnold and Clough, two poets who might be said to set the tone for the next Oxford generation of the 1840s and 1850s, were exposed to the contrasting views of Thomas Arnold and John Keble from the outset of their poetic careers, views which profoundly affected their views on poetry and poetic language. In considering their juvenilia – work which, again, has been very little discussed – Kline sheds new light on the subsequent development of these careers.

Marion Shaw, the only contributor to deal directly with *The Christian Year*, reassesses Keble's impact on one of the most well-known (and best-loved) religious poems of the century: Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Shaw demonstrates, as does Kline, how Keble's influence flourished in an entirely different and possibly hostile intellectual environment: in this case Cambridge and the Apostolic circle. While *In Memoriam* emerges, from Shaw's account, as a poem with very different aims and ends, it nonetheless echoes Keble's lyrics in both form and content, reflecting upon the hymn tradition of which they formed a part, and playing with or evoking imagery and ideas from *The Christian Year* in its own reshaping of the traditions of religious verse.

Finally, Ellen Jordan, Charlotte Mitchell and Helen Schinske come to Charlotte Yonge, from a slightly different perspective to that of Francis and Mason on women's writing, but also one which attempts to rewrite Keble's legacy as enabling rather than disabling. Their essay, based on original primary material, contradicts work on Yonge which has tended to blame Keble for her conservatism, her traditional views of gender roles, and the moralistic outlook of her novels. As these critics point out, without the close proximity of the Keble household to her home, Yonge might never have been introduced to the 'intellectual and clerical social network' which provided the background for her novels and encouraged her in her literary career. In many ways, Yonge's immensely popular novels reveal the *ethos* of Hursley more than any other

Victorian text. Moreover, since Yonge herself acted as guide, mentor and critic to a circle of aspiring women writers, taking on the role which Keble had played for her, his ideas were further spread throughout her circle.

As a whole, these essays multiply the contexts in which Keble can and ought to be read. Whether relating his writings to his interests in a specific debate, discussing their effect on other writers of the period, or locating them as responses to his contemporaries and predecessors, they additionally constitute a valuable contribution to nineteenth-century studies in general. Taken together, they show the interrelations between various contexts, so that we can see how disputes over reading might relate to disputes over language, or how educational goals could be informed by political and social ambitions and could in turn inform the writing of poetry, how a sermon, a review, a speech might constitute a decisive intercession in a debate over politics and theology, and how poetic theories could raise broad questions of gender and authorial identity. And besides these textual interactions, these essays also demonstrate the significance of Keble's physical contexts: his geographical location in Hursley and Oxford, and his temporal location in a period of rapid upheaval and change. *John Keble in Context* presents a composite image of a writer who, far from being unconcerned or disengaged, was at the forefront of this change, and whose influence radiated outwards, not only to affect his fellow Tractarians but also to sway the thoughts of men and women of very different denominations and beliefs.

Notes

- ¹ Review of J. T. Coleridge's memoir of Keble, *Literary Churchman*, February 7 1869. Collected in set of pamphlets on Keble's death, Bodleian Library, Oxford (G.Pamph. 2767). Further references to this collection cited as 'Bodleian'.
- ² *Literary Churchman*, February 7 1869 (Bodleian).
- ³ Review of Coleridge's memoir, *Oxford Undergraduate's Journal* 46 (June 2 1869) (Bodleian).
- ⁴ 'Notes on Church History', *The Penny Post*, I, 1–5. This series of anonymous articles was attributed to Keble by a letter published in the *Guardian*, April 1866 (Bodleian).
- ⁵ On Keble's involvement with the African missions, see Faught 135–8. On his opposition to the Gorham Judgement, see Battiscombe 291–3, and to the first Divorce Bill, 315–16.
- ⁶ Watson, below.
- ⁷ *The Times*, 6 April 1866, 5.
- ⁸ Letter from the Bishop of New York, *Guardian*, 23 April 1866 (Bodleian).
- ⁹ Besides the work by Stedman and Scheinberg, mentioned in note 11, below. Arseneau's recent study of Rossetti and Johnson's and Ward's studies of Hopkins contain significant discussion of these poets with regard to Tractarianism and

Keble. See also my article on nineteenth-century poetry and *The Christian Year* (Blair 2003) and the forthcoming special issue of *Victorian Poetry* on 'Tractarian Poetics', to be edited by myself and Emma Mason.

¹⁰ See Abrams 146–7, and Shaw 67, for a discussion of Keble's theories in this light.

¹¹ In fact, Keble is briefly discussed in several works published in the last few years, usually with regard to his poetic theories. See, for example, Scheinberg, especially 46–8, Stedman 174–5.

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