

Allan P. Ledger, *A Moment in Time: John and Thomas Keble and their Cotswold life* (London, Umbria Press 2017). 184 pp., many b/w & col. illustrations. Cardcovers, £14.99 [ISBN: 9781910074114]. **Reviewed 07.2018**

This appealing book has many strengths, introducing the reader not only to the family of one of the founders of the Oxford Movement, the Revd John Keble (1792-1866), sometime Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford, but also to his lesser known younger brother, the Revd Thomas Keble (1793-1875). The book is attractively and copiously illustrated with contemporary photographs, drawings and maps and it is possible to imagine the Gloucestershire that both men knew, and the parishioners whom they served, from the lucid and sensitive text. This volume would have been helped had Keble's life and ministry been placed in the context of other Gloucestershire clergyman who were sympathetic to the Tractarians. It would have been useful to refer to the work of such scholars as Professor Malcolm D. Lambert, author of *The Unknown Cotswold Village: Eastcombe 1500-1980* (1981), and others who have studied individual parishes, where the churches' fixtures and fittings and the pattern of worship were affected by the ideas of Keble, Dr Pusey, John Henry Newman and their circle. Keble as an old fashioned High Church Tory was very much in the mainstream of many men who were beneficed in the diocese and it is to be regretted that he is not placed in the contemporary context of the conjoined diocese of Gloucester and Bristol. This diocese was served by Dr James Henry Monk (1784-1856) who became Bishop of Gloucester in 1830 and of Gloucester and Bristol in 1836, when the dioceses were joined. It would also have been interesting to learn something of Keble's relationship with the Venerable Thomas Thorp (1797-1878) who was the Archdeacon of Bristol from 1836 onwards. While John Keble moved from Gloucestershire to Hursley in Hampshire in 1835, the Thorp and Keble families were well known to each other. Thorp, a High Churchman, was influenced by Tractarianism and by Wordsworth and was the first President of the Cambridge Camden Society, which was founded to encourage the restoration of churches in a method sympathetic to their mediaeval heritage. Thorp was later Rector of Kemerton in Gloucestershire from 1839 until his death.

John and Thomas Keble served three Cotswold villages near Fairford in Gloucestershire and John Keble composed at Southrop St Peter many of his poems for every day in *The Christian Year*, which was first published in 1827 and sold, during the 19th century, over a million copies worldwide. Many editions of this work were luxuriously bound and were carried by both men and women to church and studied at home and in the gardens of their houses. John Keble entertained a number of his friends from Oxford at Southrop and Mr Ledger is not alone in believing that these visits laid the foundation stone to the Oxford movement.

The Revd Thomas Keble, 'Tom', had a lengthy and distinguished clerical career as Vicar of Bisley, All Saints, near Stroud in Gloucestershire which, prior to the publication of this book, had not been explored with the exception of one work, *The younger brother: a short biography of the Rev. Thomas Keble, Vicar of Bisley, Gloucestershire, 1827-1873*, (1975) by Geoffrey Sanders.

The Keble family was drawn from the comfortable middle classes and their paternal grandfather was a brewer and a maltster. Lovers of the works of Charles Dickens will

remember the dialogue in *Great Expectations* where it is explained that Miss Havisham's father was a brewer and consequently respectable whilst those in the retail trade were distinctly detrop to be received into polite society. Their father, the Revd John Keble (1745-1835), vicar for fifty years of Coln Saint Aldwyn's, near Fairford, lived a peaceful and fulfilled life as a parson in the 18th Century model. He educated his sons at home prior to sending them up to Oxford. John arrived in 1808 and studied at Corpus Christi College where he became a close friend of John Coleridge, the nephew of Samuel Taylor Coleridge; an influential friendship which lasted a lifetime. He met Wordsworth shortly after his ordination in 1815 and was greatly influenced by members of the Romantic Movement. Given that the Kebles were a distinguished clerical family spanning many generations it would have been helpful to have included a genealogical table to help the reader identify the different people mentioned in the text. It is also to be regretted that the book does not have an index, which seriously hampers its use as a work of scholarship.

There is an extensive list of appendices which sheds light on John Keble's life, his time as Professor of Poetry (1831-1841) and publishes some of his previously unknown hymns and poems. They also deal with aspects of the family home in Fairford, his ancestry, Keble family wills in the Gloucestershire Record Office, and the influence of Keble on the current Prime Minister's father, and by inference, on her Christian beliefs. These appendices partly compensate for the fact that the footnotes are of a more meagre nature than might have been hoped for in such a work. This book is heartily recommended to all of those who wish to place figures from the Tractarian movement more fully into their context, and to understand more about their web of interpersonal connections, their attitudes to parochial work and their commitment to the spiritual development and growth of those whose souls had been placed in their charge. It sheds interesting light on a rural Gloucestershire which was soon to disappear, but enables the reader to use her imagination to capture something of the tranquility, isolation and the trials and tribulations of an Anglican clergyman in parishes where the majority of other people were uneducated, and where the social circle was limited.

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