

**VILLAGE SERMONS
ON THE BAPTISMAL
SERVICE**

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Village Sermons on the Baptismal Service by John Keble & E. B. P.

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JOHN KEBLE & E. B. P.

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W. T. Kirkpatrick

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THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE,

BY

THE REV. JOHN KEBLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN YEAR."

Third Thousand.

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1869.

NOTICE.

The following Sermons were given to me for publication by my revered friend John Keble now many years ago. It was at a time when, sermons of our common friends Newman and Manning having been withdrawn from circulation, the want was felt, of some to replace them. I did not *then* publish these sermons, on a ground which in the eyes of some will give them now a special charm; their simplicity. I wanted sermons for the intellectual classes, and these were written for the poor. I feared too that, since they were written under circumstances, which required the writer to withhold so much of his thought, their publication would rather be disappointing. I asked him, from time to time, for sermons, like those of his, which were preached at the Consecration of St. Saviour's, Leeds. He told me at last; "They said to me, that I was preaching over the people's heads, and so I changed my style."

The characteristic then of these sermons is their affectionate simplicity. Here and there, there occur hints of an accurate theology, or gleams of poetic thought, or what would have been eloquence, had it been developed. But so, through human mismanagement, it was arranged, that the writer of "the Christian Year" should, for the chief part of his life, preach to a peasant flock, of average mental capacity. He had been chosen as one of the "select Preachers" before the University when not yet 30, and again seven years later in 1828. In 1833, at the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Rowley, he preached an Assize sermon at Oxford, which formed an era in the Oxford movement.

One more Sermon, "On Church and State," he preached at the appointment of the same Vice-Chancellor, on the anniversary of the accession of King William IV in 1835. On the following year, 1836, at the visitation of Dr Dealtry, Chancellor of Winchester, he preached a remarkable Sermon, "Primitive Tradition recognised in Holy Scripture." Thenceforth, as far as I know, no one gave any opportunity for that voice (whose every word, in our early years, rivetted the thoughts of us all) to be heard by any intellectual audience, until, when he had reached the threescore years and ten, the late Vice-Chancellor, Dr Lightfoot, asked him to undertake the office of select Preacher. The invitation drew out an answer of his characteristic modesty; that "his voice was no longer strong enough to be heard, and that he himself was not of the calibre for such a congregation." With these rare exceptions, his high intellectual gifts were (as far as man gave him the opportunities) confined to teaching his Hampshire village-children and his peasant flock.

And so ended the history of his preaching, according to that wide law of God's Providence, Who, while He accepts what would be done, as if it were done, and forms, the more, active souls through the inaction to which they are assigned, allows or orders that so many of His gifts should in human sight be wasted. It is not in the English Church alone, that gifts are wasted and those whose talents might be treasures to the Church are misplaced. What the Mind of Him, Who formed their minds in so rare a mould, was in this apparent waste, will be known in that Day alone, when He "maketh up His jewels," and the light, which men hid here, shall shine the more brightly in the Eternal Day.

E. B. P.

Christ Church,
Trinity Sunday. 1868.

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