

**A PRIEST TO THE TEMPLE;
OR, THE COUNTRY
PARSON, HIS CHARACTER
AND RULE OF HOLY LIFE**

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A Priest to the Temple; Or, The Country Parson, His Character and Rule of Holy Life by George Herbert

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GEORGE HERBERT

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A Priest to the Temple

Or, The Country Parson

His Character and
Rule of Holy Life

By
GEORGE HERBERT

With an Introduction and Brief Notes

By
The Bishop of North Carolina

NEW YORK
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This edition of the Country Parson is dedicated to the memory of Joseph Blount Cheshire, D. D., sometime Rector of Calvary Church, Tarborough, and Trinity Church, Scotland Neck, in the Diocese of North Carolina; who, during a ministry of nearly sixty years, illustrated by his life and work the best qualities of the Country Parson, in his Character and Rule of Holy Life.

INTRODUCTION

THIS is believed to be the first edition of George Herbert's "Country Parson," published in America separate from his Poems. Notwithstanding the very high quality of Herbert's poetry it is not of a character to be very widely appreciated. His prose, however, is wholly free from the faults which mar his verse, and it deserves an attention which of late years it has not received. Certainly this is the case with "A Priest to the Temple, or the Country Parson, his Character and Rule of Holy Life." It is not too much to say of it that for beauty and truth to nature, for its combination of the ideal and the practical, for its presentation of an almost heavenly perfection in terms of human experience, it has not its equal in the religious literature of our language. It gives us the very "form and matter" of Christian Priesthood, so conceived and presented as to make the best feel humbled in com-

paring himself with such a standard, while at the same time it comforts and encourages the weakest, and by a sweet and loving compulsion it helps and guides both in their holy endeavors. Its simplicity and unaffectedness, its directness of purpose, the practical good sense of its rules and suggestions, its genuine humility and sympathy, its condescension to human weakness yet with loyalty to divine righteousness, its absolute fidelity to truth and duty, its heavenly wisdom, and clear vision, are embodied in that quality of English prose which we love and admire but can no longer write or speak.

Thirty-five years ago a "briefless barrister" in a great city, with no special intentions towards the ministry, I bought one wintry night at a shabby curb-stone book stall, lighted by a smoking kerosene torch, a dingy little volume, containing Bishop Hall's Satires, in which, at that period of my life, I was much interested. Sitting down a few minutes later in my solitary lodging to examine my purchase, I found that it contained also Herbert's English works. Pickering's two beautiful volumes of Herbert had stood on the shelves of my father's library as far back as I could remember, but I had never looked into

them. In the dingy little book, bought for a few cents, my eye chanced to light upon a sentence in the first chapter of the Country Parson. My interest was aroused. I read on and on, until I had read it through without being able to stop. The impression made upon me by that first reading, years have not effaced. I have never ceased to wonder that such a book should be so little known and used. Since I have had the responsibility of ordaining and sending out Country Parsons, I have bought every copy I could find, and have given them to young clergymen. I cannot but believe that, in bringing out this edition of Herbert's beautiful treatise on the pastoral office, the publisher is conferring a real benefit upon the Church.

It were bootless to point out the many lessons which may here be learned. The Country Parson needs no interpreter. One point of his teaching, however, may be mentioned and emphasized. In his chapter, "The Parson Praying," Herbert coins a word. He says that the Country Parson is not only careful to render with clearness and reverence his own part in the public service of the Church, but he often instructs his people how to carry themselves in divine worship, as to pos-

ture, attentiveness, and manner of responding ; that he teaches them to answer “gently and pausably, thinking what they say.” The dictionaries give no other example of this word *pausably*. Herbert made it because he needed it. That is how good words come ; and this word, with reference to Herbert’s use of it, is a golden word. It is the key to open the beauty and effectiveness of the Prayer Book considered as a manual of common worship. Unfortunately the thing signified is as rare as the word. How many of the Clergy have ever given one half hour to instructing their people how they should bear themselves, sitting, standing, kneeling, in the public service ; and how they should respond so as to make the service really an act of common worship, and not the mere public commingling in dissonant murmur of individual, unrelated devotions ? They seem to think, with Dogberry, that reading (in the public service at least) comes by nature. In fact common worship is necessarily an artificial act, and is possible only by the observance of some fixed rule. That rule Herbert reveals in his unique word. The service must be read *pausably*. This is necessary, in the first place, to bring out the true significance