[back cover]

Joseph Butler was an Anglican priest and later a bishop who wrote about ethics, religion, and other philosophical themes. He is not well known today. During his lifetime and into the early part of the twentieth century he was better known especially for his major work the *Analogy of Religion* (1736). Today he is known mostly for his sermons which are interpreted as essays on ethics and for his essay on identity.

Butler had a profound effect on J. H. Newman, Matthew Arnold, and W. E. Gladstone and some effect on many other popular, academic, and professional readers. This book is as much about Butler's sources and his reception as it is about the way he arranged and presented the evidence in the first half of the 18th century.

He was a good man and is recognized by the Anglican church as a divine. We have no interest in taking a nostalgic look at a quaint figure in English church history. To those who claim Butler is unknown, that he was "blown out of the water" by John Wesley or Karl Barth, or Cornelius van Til, we can only say Butler is not as well known in the 20th and 21st centuries as in the 19th, but he is certainly not unknown to those who have taken any interest in philosophy, religion, or ethics.

Today there has been a revival of interest in Bishop Butler. Our concern is to build and maintain a bridge that will help to keep this momentum. He offers an ethic that is universal and clearly Christian, yet it is based on the nature of man. Kant had a similar project, but in our opinion, Butler makes more compelling arguments. What is of interest to the Christian apologist is Butler's work in this area. The purpose of this book is to present Butler's ideas. We believe that his ethics have a universality that is applicable to people of all religious faiths and those that have none. It is common sense way of looking at ethics for everyday interaction.

This book is a narrative argument presenting in detail how Butler's creative arrangement of the evidence served as a bridge between the ancients as known in the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew originals, and the moderns, mostly Anglophone, who constituted Butler's work environment and his reception in the latter day down to the present. We can hardly expect everyone to agree with Butler on all points, we certainly do not. The point at issue is rather whether he merits a seat at the present-day round table of deliberation on matters pertaining to philosophy, religion, and ethics.

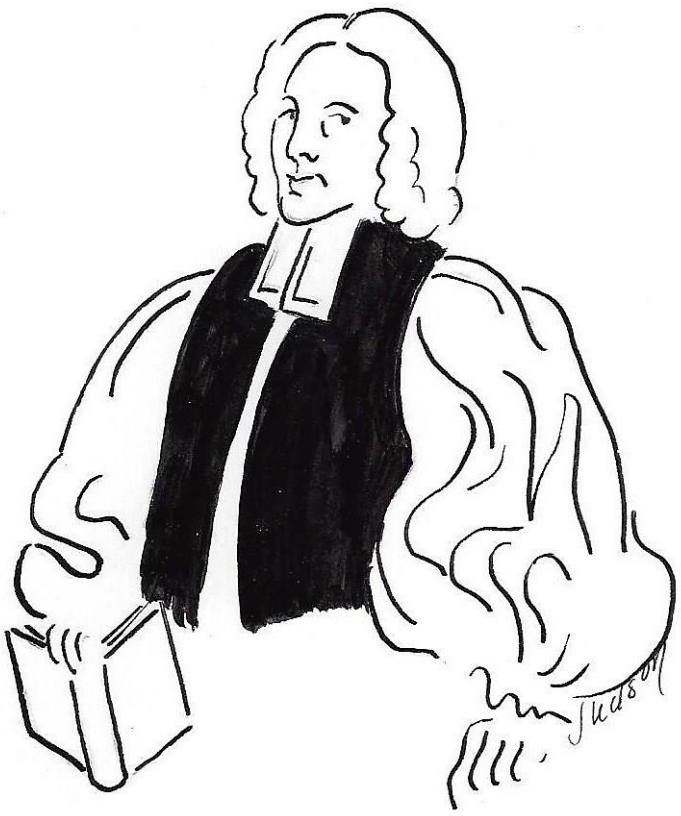
Wednesday, November 25, 2020

Joseph Butler as a Bridge joining Ancients, Moderns & Future Generations

David E. White & Michael J. Maranda

"Be a good man — be virtuous — be religious — be a good man.
Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."
From Lockhart's " Life of Scott."

This same rule of life that Scott urged in his fiction
had previously been urged by Bishop Butler
in his sermons and in his *Analogy*.



BISHOP BUTLER

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

LC	CORRESPONDENCE WITH CLARKE 1716	
FS	FIFTEEN SERMONS 1726	
FS Pref	PREFACE TO FIFTEEN SERMONS 1729	
AR	ANALOGY OF RELIGION 1736	
AR Adv	ADVERTISEMENT TO ANALOGY OF RELIGION 1736	
AR Intro	INDRODUCTION TO ANALOGY OF RELIGION 1736	
Diss 1	DISSERTATION I ON PERSONAL IDENTITY	
Diss 2	DISSERTATION II ON VIRTUE	
SS 1739	PUBLIC SERMON 1739	SPG
SS 1740	PUBLIC SERMON 1740	Spital
SS 1741	PUBLIC SERMON 1741	Martyrdom
SS 1745	PUBLIC SERMON 1745	Charity Schools
SS 1747	PUBLIC SERMON 1747	Accession
SS 1748	PUBLIC SERMON 1748	Infirmary
SS 1749	SIX SERMONS COLLECTED 1749	
DC	DURHAM CHANGE 1751	

IEP	Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
KJV	King James Version (translation) of the Bible
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
SEP	Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Preface

This Preface attempts to define the aim of the book and its intended audience. To further clarify the intent of the authors some points of method will be made explicit. The intent of this book is to match some of Butler's more important ideas with the most pressing issues in philosophy of religion today, and to undertake a candid examination of the principal ideas appealed to by Bishop Butler, the only preacher routinely studied in courses of moral philosophy, and one of four philosophers so identified in the Calendar of the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England and other members of the Anglican communion.

From the start we must state we are not involved in any project of proclaiming the superiority of Christianity to other religions. Nor are we involved with the claim that those who accept a religion are better people than those who reject all religion. We maintain that nothing prevents an atheist from living a good life by any reasonable standard. The intent of this book is to match some of Butler's more important ideas with the most pressing issues in philosophy of religion today.

The urgent need in our time is to connect Butler's understanding of the importance of character development in addressing the most pressing issues of our time and in our lives. Our intent is to look at the root cause of suffering, injustice, and the failure of individuals, societies, and civilizations to flourish. In Butler's time, there were those who blamed Christianity for what was wrong in the world. In reply, Butler followed the pattern laid out by Augustine of Hippo in his *City of God* (*De civitate dei*). Augustine wrote an apologia (defense) of the Christians who were blamed by some Romans for the attack on Rome in A.D. 410 by Alaric I and his Christian (Arian) army. Well over 1300 years later, Butler found Christianity being accused, unfairly in his opinion, of having interrupted the indulgent pleasures of the world, and he too wrote a legalistic defense. All parties to this type of dispute understood the conflict as one of the rulers of the Earth (the Roman and then the British empires) as engaged in a struggle to maintain order in their own lands and to win favor with the divinity or divinities that ruled over them. Meanwhile, for the ancients and for the moderns, the people, at the level of the individual, the family, or the city were tasked with maintaining order by bringing the human passions under control, not so much to extinguish them but to redirect them in the service of peace, freedom and happiness for all. Pagans, Christians, and heretics all entertained the same world view under which this most desired end state (however imagined) was the aim and purpose, the final cause, of the providential order of the world.

Our aim is to present the life, work, and reception of Bishop Butler as the story of one who took up Christ's commission to redeem (save) humanity's place in the world. According to Butler, and the mainstream of Christians, at least until recently, this work of carrying our Christ's instruction to transmit the Gospel is taken up Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this work, begun by the Creator and Ruler of the world, continues to this day. Butler defended the framing

narrative of the Bible, but his primary concern was neither metaphysics nor theology but the alleviation of suffering. The point of the narrative is not to provide an accurate account which one may 'take' however one likes, but to deliver a charge, an injunction, an admonition. We cannot debate the truth of commands because it cannot be true or false, but only lawful or unlawful, wise or foolish, obeyed or ignored. Our aim is not to have the last word on Joseph Butler (we are about 300 years too late to have the first word), but to flesh out some of the details of what happened in Butler's life, what the places where he lived and the church offices he held were like, how best to interpret his writings in light now of three centuries of published exposition and criticism.

We believe in presenting our understanding of Butler to the public and to professionals. Many professionals in a variety of fields (as indicated in the Acknowledgements below) have been of great help, and when they have been critical, as the certainly have, we both recognize they are doing the job they were trained to do. The public has also contributed much, partly about Butler directly but mainly by joining small groups focused on topics of special interest to them. The problem comes with those who ask why we write about Butler at all. "Are you not aware no one knows who Butler is?" "Why are you trying to force your religion on others?" "Can't you see this is just your opinion?" And, of course, "You cheapen the subject by talking of sacred things using the crass language of the marketplace [of ideas]".

Each chapter of this book takes up Bishop Butler's ideas regarding an inhibition to the whole-hearted practice of virtue and piety. There are those who "know better" and have no interest in living the life of virtue and piety. There are also those who already "do well" at living the life of virtue and piety and feel no need for philosophy or religion. And there are those who are in accord with the program advocated here but need more in the way of specific instructions regarding how to live the life of virtue and piety. Legitimate as they may be in terms of the human condition, they are beside the point of what this book is about, and beside the point of what has been going on in the tradition for a few thousand years.

What Butler does claim, and we agree, is that none of the many attacks on religion in general or Christianity in particular is strong enough to convince a person of good will and common sense that they are appropriate subjects of mirth and ridicule. Butler's main claim, and ours, is that from this premise there is a line of thought leading to the whole-hearted practice of virtue and piety over the course of one's life. This path from mere possibility to determined and intentional living runs through observations on what it means to follow nature, to let your conscience be your guide, to accept the dictates of prudential common sense, and to search the scripture for whatever truth you are able to find.

Our everyday language has evolved since Butler's time, 300 years ago, and no matter what we say or do we are captives of our history. Even those who by the accident of birth live outside the course of English Christianity or Christianity in English are affected by the consequences of English Christianity and Christianity in English. We propose to shine a spotlight on one section of the stream that runs from the beginning of the world down to the time this book was created.

The notion of small communities being foundational to Christian living is presented in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* (*Gemeinsames Leben*).[1] Those who are in the Bishop Butler community are not necessarily practicing Christians but are most likely from a Christian background. It may be helpful to think of our group as drawn together by an interest in Butler and the belief that all would benefit if his ideas were better known. Most but certainly not all think that we would all be better off if more of us adopted virtue and piety as a way of life. Our group is dynamic, and at the highest level, autonomous and self-regulating.

This book is introductory. We preach and (as best we can) practice the methods of critical scrutiny down to the least detail. We are trying to make Bishop Butler better known and making Butler better known can be subsumed under the rule of life requiring us everywhere and always to act for the good of all. By making Butler better known we understand:

- Raising awareness of who Bishop Butler was, how he lived, and what he wrote.
- Encourage anyone interested to participate in making Bishop Butler better known.

For those who are Anglican, we will argue the case in Anglican terms; if you are atheist, we will claim without God there is more, not less, need for people to live rigorously ethical lives. Deprived of the hope and fear of rewards and punishments in a future so dear to Butler's life and thought, the moralist must appeal to human nature, or if that too is rejected to just plain nature, and if the audience includes hardened atheistic existentialists then to their alienation, their despair, and their anxiety.

Those who make the effort to make Bishop Butler better known are willing to consider all forms of persuasion, and methods of the collection of evidence and the presentation of argumentation but not with the aim of gaining assent to a particular doctrine as much as conversion, reform, and revision of life.

Since the 1920s interest in Butler has focused more on his ethics than his philosophy of religion, a bias favored by S. T. Coleridge[2] much earlier. We still live in a time of unsatisfying lifestyles and moral confusion. It is not so much Butler personally that can help as it is the philosophical ideas he assembled from his study of moral philosophy, theology, and the law. Our contention and our reason for writing is that we see potential value for today in the guide to life urged by Bishop Butler. Butler believed the four pillars of the good life were: (1) obeying conscience, (2) acting in accord with prudence based on probability, (3) following nature, and (4) searching the scripture.

[1] New York: HarperCollins, 1954, trans. John W. Doberstein.

[2] Michael John Kooy, "Disinterested Patriotism: Bishop Butler, Hazlitt and Coleridge's Quarto Pamphlet of 1798." *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 21, Spring 2003, pp.55-65.

Our intent is to brief readers on the state of the evidence regarding living the life of virtue and piety,[3] leaving the final step to those readers. Butler seemed to think that it is hard enough to discern God's will in our own lives; impossible to know what God wills for someone else. We try never to confuse the commendable activity of seeking truth by personal experience, reflection, and conversation with the despicable practice of trafficking in the truth by commercial publication, propaganda, and promotional or didactical performance. This important point needs to be stated emphatically, repeatedly, and without fear of contradiction. A good supporting analogy is that of the expert witness. Part of what it means to be an expert witness is that the expert can testify to conclusions reached because of examining physical evidence according to the protocols of a specialization. With enough training and favorable conditions of observation one may be able to conclude that this painting is the work of such and such painter and not an imitation or forgery. Truth seekers do like to reach a consensus but become suspicious when there is uniformity of opinion. As there is no reason for those outside of the drift of Protestantism to summarily reject the observations and inferences presented in this book so there is no cause for Anglicans or anyone to accept them prior to careful, personal examination. We call this point important both because it is a pillar of our method, but also because it is black letter Butler: that this life we have taken up as a result of the accident of birth is in a probationary state of trial, and of rigorous testing in the face of temptation. This important point is taken up early in the Introduction to this book (below) and restated in our Conclusion.

By calling our work introductory we mean to indicate that it may serve as a useful gateway to the study of Bishop Butler, his sources, life, works, and reception, as that study has emerged over the past 300 years. We also intend to introduce the continuing conversation or oral tradition, which Bishop Butler participated in and which has been continued down to the present. Finally, and most importantly (obviously), we have attempted to open to the reader one potentially useful vision of what it means to be a good human being.

Rather than digress into philology needlessly we have taken over Butler's vocabulary and refer to the good life as a life of virtue and piety. We are by necessity reading Butler retrospectively, but it is Butler whom we are reading and not some latter-day representation of the bishop. (A glossary of philosophical and theological terms is supplied at the end of this book.)

With ancient and medieval roots, Christian philosophy of religion looked at the credibility of the Christian claims (made in texts that had already proved themselves crucial in the formation and evolution of Christian belief and practice) on such topics as the existence of God, the future life, the moral economy of the world, human nature especially as having been made in the image of God (later lost), the credibility of the Bible as a revelation and as a rule of

[3] "Any religious faith, though, is ultimately to be judged by one thing—does it, or does it not, produce holy people, people of wisdom and generosity, whose lives in some way mirror the Love at the heart of the universe? We can see the hatred and violence of fundamentalists and fanatics for the corruptions of religion that they are—if we can point to religious people who actually have been channels of God's love." (Lloyd 2008)

life, the possibility of redemption (recovery of the lost divine image), and the hope of reconciliation among the various religions and peoples of the world.

In Christian philosophy, love rules the world and to be a religious philosopher one must submit to the loving reign of God. God created us and our living place, the world, in love, so we should love God, the world, ourselves, and our neighbors. The rule of life is love, and therefore nominally at least we have answered our primary question.

In the 18th century Bishop Butler's preaching on love helped to make England, at least, a more loving place, a place in which people were more inclined to live according to virtue and piety, but Butler's main effect was on the language of love. Admittedly, claims regarding Butler's effect are subjective. What is verifiable is that Butler's sermons are the only sermons that continue to be taught in secular courses of moral philosophy, and that his thoughts made a major impression on some of the most influential people in the 19th century: Emerson, Newman, and Gladstone.

He may not have opened new and more ethical ways of expressing self-love, but he explained to the satisfaction of many that self-love and love of others are not contradictory, and that once that alleged contradiction has been cleared there is every reason to identify the morally good life with the enjoyment of a happy life. He set aside the presumption that self-love and love of others were necessarily at odds. His idea of loving God extended to a close and determined reading of the word of God, and for caring for the natural world as created by God.

We know from our experience with secular matters that humans have the capacity to regulate their own lives according to virtue and, of course, piety, according to love of the divine and all things human. We also know that all our faculties are flawed, some deeply flawed. We are subject to self-deception, hypocrisy, and vast, often unsuspected fields of ignorance.

Logic and passions (both God given) serve as a self-regulatory system aimed at the greatest happiness of the individual and of the greatest number. Are desires and acts that take us down a different path perverse? How can we know any of this, the right questions let alone the right answers? To answer this last question, we have provided a chapter on Butler's method.

By Butler's ideas we refer not only to his ethical theory or his exegetical details but rather to his defense of the broad concepts of a providential governance of the world, the notion of a moral economy, and the general credibility of a scripture revelation. Our brief is not for a general acceptance of these ideas but for a consideration of them in terms of evidence and argumentation.

This work is an introductory monograph on the significance of Bishop Butler for the problems in the world today and is presented as the final part of the senior author's work on Butler.[4]. We are not interested in the marketing of Bishop Butler or in selling anything. Our

[4] When complete, the project will consist of the annotated text of the *Works of Bishop Butler* published by the University of Rochester Press, 2006, and this introductory monograph with a revised and up-dated bibliography, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. These publications are complemented by the Bishop Butler website (bishopbutler.org), the Bishop

interest is in seeking out people of good will and common sense who are making a positive contribution to the environment and life on Earth with the aim of associating informally and in relation to Butler's ideas in answer to the ancient Socratic question of how we should live.

This book is expected to be most useful to:

- Anyone interested in ethics or religion.[5] Early in his career Butler declared "For, as I design the search after truth as the business of my life, I shall not be ashamed to learn from any person." (LC 4.3)[6]
- This book should be helpful for anyone looking for a guide to life, or for a firmer grounding for the rule already followed.
- Anyone engaged in psychological or pastoral counselling. Butler repeatedly insisted not only on the importance of practice, but that religion was a matter of practice as opposed to assent to propositions.
- Anyone involved in developing Anglicanism as an option in the pluralistic fields of religion in the future. Butler may be described correctly as an advocate and apologist for the Church of England. Anglican theology has been in a difficult situation for some time. Perhaps it is impossible to salvage at this point. Or perhaps something of value can be recovered, reconstructed, and redeveloped. Butler faced a similar situation of scorn by the educated, and his views held the field for more than a century. What Butler had that so many other advocates lack was a primary devotion to seeking the truth and letting the chips fall where they may. With the death of John Macquarrie and the conversion of Richard Swinburne to Orthodoxy, David Brown would seem to be the preeminent Anglican philosophical theologian with a strong positive disposition regarding Butler.
- Researchers or teachers concerned with philosophical or theological studies or with the work of Wittgenstein and Habermas regarding social communications. For example, his remarks on reading in the preface (1729) to his *Fifteen Sermons* apply to any serious reading, and his commentary on the use of evidence in chapter 7 of part 2 of the *Analogy*

Butler Study Center, and the work of the Bishop Butler Society Ltd, whose mission is to make Bishop Butler better known for the benefit of all.

[5] We define religion and ethics as the subject covered in James Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.* That is, whereas Butler often uses the word "religion" to what he believes to be the clearest and best understanding of religion from a philosophical point of view and therefore the view most suited for putting into practice. Despite this limitation we maintain Butler provides both all that some need, and some of what all need.

[6] "Cato the Elder, the great-grandfather of Cato the Younger, coined a maxim in his famous essay, *On Agriculture*, which explained best practices for farming in the Roman era. 'Be careful,' he said about the management practices of your neighbors, 'not to rashly refuse to learn from others.' This lesson was picked up on and rephrased by hundreds of writers since, including Ben Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Only an idiot turns up their nose at how other people do things. Sure, nine times out of ten, you are right and they're wrong. But that one time? That's the game changer." (Daily Stoic 3/20/2020)

pertains to any type of physical or testimonial evidence. Butler believed the intellectual powers of humans were given by God to be used for a purpose. He did not want to be an enabler of credulity.

- Proponents and critics of philosophy as a way of life. In his lifetime, Butler was better known for the church offices he held than for the books he published, and his published works were all produced in connection with his clerical and pastoral work.

Our business, seen as probative and probationary, is to convert millions of local, tactical wins to a grand, strategic victory. The genius of Christianity (on Butler's reading), as opposed to the now discarded "triumphalism," is that it drains, filters out, and purifies the final state of ecstatic union by eliminating all egoism, nationalism, racism, while retaining the individual, personal identity as the locus of love and moral responsibility.[7] We do not expect Butler will overtake apologists such as C. S. Lewis in general popularity, but we do see him as having a sound foundation of respectability on which to build. "Butler is a calm apologist grappling with contemporary arguments that challenged the Christian faith and dealing methodically with their errors and inconsistencies." (Cunliffe 2004)

The organizational skeleton of Butler's whole works is too often neglected.[8] Early on he declares the search for truth to be the business of his life, and it soon becomes apparent that the truth that interests him most is the truth regarding the rule of, or guide to, life. Working in no order, Butler argues for the elimination of such candidates as hedonism, egoism, utilitarianism, deism, atheism, and overly refined intellectualism, leaving the field clear for the more favored principles of conscience, [Christian] scripture, nature, and probability. Butler then shows that the action favored by moral probability, the conscientious and scriptural action, is also the action most in accord with, most closely following nature. From here it is only a short step to seeing that those who accept the attraction of living according to moral probability of conscience in accord with nature and scripture will also see the God of classical theism as the most likely unifying principle of all things. At this point minimally informed readers will object that the benevolent God of classical theism is incompatible with the pervasive and unexplained evil observed in the world. Such readers will also observe that the personal deity of classical theism is superfluous as an explanation under today's physicalism as he was under the rule of necessity in Butler's day.

Our work on Butler is the continuation of one thread, that of philosophical scrutiny, of Butler's life, work, and legacy. People sometimes see Butler as a side road, perhaps even a dead

[7] Following Bishop Butler, we posit four superior and exemplary loves: love of self, love of neighbor, love of the world, and love of God. The many subordinate loves are not repudiated but are seen as needing to be organized to accord with the higher principles of our human nature. We agree with Butler's confidence such an organization can be attained within the moral economy of the world we experience. We are less confident than Butler that the various philosophies and religions can be ranked according to how well they support this conversion and reorganization.
[8] Admittedly, some may find it too often repeated in this book.

end, in the continuing development of the Anglican tradition within the Christian religion, one of the great institutions of human life. The critics see themselves as taking the highway to world's end and see no need to ponder.

Summation of the whole

Butler's material concerns ethics and religion, the content of evidence and argumentation regarding the classical issues still debated in his time. Some see his main contribution as implications for action in ordinary life rather than the pressure to nominal assent to a proposition: thus, Butler sees philosophy more as a way of life than a method of gaining knowledge. Butler is determined to pursue truth without appeal to authority or dogmatism, and to continuously and dynamically applying the test of practice, of living one's philosophy as a practical matter, all the while seeing the living practice of philosophy as a test, trial, probation, trying to determine whether it is possible to see the world as a providential construction, and if so what difference such a vision makes in the living of one's life.

Acknowledgments

The Bishop Butler Society Ltd (incorporated in the State of New York for the purpose of making Bishop Butler better known for the benefit of all) is a non-membership, non-tax-exempt, not-for-profit corporation, whose only source of funding is free-will donations, so our gratitude extends not only to those associated with the Society but also, and even primarily, to those who are mentioned in the bibliography or who have taught, studied, or presented material relating to Bishop Butler in the context of church or university. The continued support and active involvement of immediate family (David's wife, Linda, and their children Sarah, Joshua, and Jeremiah, and their spouses) is evident throughout.

Additionally, there is the pool of extended family, personal acquaintances, or readers of Butler whose association with this project remains ephemeral but nevertheless significant. The full extent of those who need to be acknowledged in the work of making Bishop Butler better known for the benefit of all includes actors, poets, painters, preachers, librarians, video producers and performers, custodians of the places associated with Butler's work, editors, publishers, and book dealers. Our phrase "for the benefit of all" is probably open to an objection along the lines of Derek Parfit's critique of utilitarianism.

The constitution and course of the Bishop Butler Society was inspired by such institutions as Chapel House at Colgate University, The Rothko Chapel in Houston, the Center for Inquiry in Buffalo, Compeer Inc. of Rochester, the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell, and Oasis511 at St. John Fisher College.

Programs such as the World Congress of Philosophy, the American Philosophical Association, the New York State Philosophical Association, the University of Hawaii Humanities Conference, Christian Pathways at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the Bishop Butler Lecture at the University of Bristol, philosophical discussion clubs at Cornell University, Syracuse University, and the University of Rochester as well the work of organizations such as:

The John Locke Newsletter, Catalogue Raisonné Scholars Association, the American Criminology Association, the Jonathan Edwards Society, the Popular Culture Association and its local affiliates, the Bertrand Russell Society and its local affiliates, the Charles Williams Society, the William James Society, the International Institute for Field-Being (Hong Kong) and its New York State affiliates, The Matilda Joslyn Gage Association, The Nigerian Philosophical Association, The Butler [Family] Society, The Joseph Butler Society at Oriel College, The Institute for Human Sciences (Russia), The Conway Hall Ethical Society, (formerly the South Place Ethical Society), the Center for Philosophic Exchange (Brockport), The Evangelical Philosophical Society, and the Society of Christian Philosophers and its local affiliates.

Individuals in the US, England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, India, China, Nigeria, Turkey, and Greece have provided intellectual, emotional, and spiritual insight over the years, and if space permits the naming of only one individual person, that would have to be the late Adrienne Asch, whose scholarship, example, and force of personality, have both fueled the operation and provided the Society with a vision of an attainable just society.

Used book dealerships such as DeBue's Books (Bill Buechel), Greenwood Books, Anglican Bibliopole, Bishop Butler Books, North Star Books, Timothy Wilder Books, and Thoemmes have helped to manage the spill of ink pertaining to Bishop Butler, as have historians, librarians, archivists, and curators affiliated with the New York Public Library, General Theological Seminary, Columbia University, Teachers College, Union Theological Seminary, Colgate Rochester Theological Seminary, St. John Fisher College, the University of Rochester, Roberts Wesleyan, Nazareth College, Hobart and William Smith College, Wells College, Syracuse University, Durham University Libraries, Dean & Chapter Library (Durham), Bristol Public Library, Bath Public Library, the British Library, Reading University, Weardale Historical, Bishop Auckland, Hampton Court, Harvard University and Theological Seminary, Yale University and Theological Seminary, Princeton University and Theological Seminary, Dartmouth College, Pennsylvania University, Boston Public Library, Cleveland Public Library, Penn State University, Emory University, Oriel College, King's College Oxford, the Bodleian Library, Cornell University.

In its efforts to make the life, work, and reception of Bishop Butler better known to the general public, the Society is grateful to publishers including The University of Rochester Press (Boydell & Brewer), Clevis Hook, Tiger Bark, The University of Rochester Press, *Second Order*, *Philosophy Now*, Boston University, the Philosophical Association of Turkey, The Edwin Mellen Press, The RIT Gary Graphic Arts Press, and community associations such as The Flying Squirrel, Books ETC of Macedon, Baobab Cultural, Writers & Books of Rochester, Equal Grounds, and the Greenhouse on East Main.

At St. John Fisher College, the administration, faculty, students, library, Welcome Center and Barnes and Noble bookstore staff have been helpful both in their assistance and in their counsels of restraint over the long haul. The work of the Society also benefits from collaboration with groups consisting primarily of independent scholars. These include the Art and Philosophy

Collision, Art and Ideas, Language and Philosophy, the St. David's Celtic Society, the Greater Rochester Russell Set, Bristol Hills Books, Just Poets, and the Rochester Poets Society.

The frontispiece is by Judith Judson, and the cover art, suggestive of the ethical choices we face, is by Ryan Gugerty.

Michael Maranda the Younger has supplied many comments on some of the late drafts. These comments proved of great help in the process of revision. Gregory Rainone's critical response proved especially stimulating of improvement.

I. Preliminaries

Our aim is to present evidence and argumentation in support of the claim there is a line of thought leading to a full life guided by the whole-hearted practice of virtue and piety. We agree with Butler that society will be better the more people adopt the life of virtue and piety. We also claim and attempt to demonstrate this path from mere possibility to determined and intentional living runs through observations on what it means to follow nature, to let your conscience be your guide, to accept the dictates of prudential common sense, and to search scripture for whatever truth you are able to find.

Before taking up the content of Butler's religious philosophy, we must provide some details of his life, and make explicit his method. We must also stress that no matter how much we admit that Butler was an apologist for the Christian religion, and no matter how much we may take Butler's side on the issues, we are not presenting in this book an apology for Christianity. *Neither this book nor any part of it should be taken as a defense of Christianity over or against any other religion, any form of humanism, or the way of life practiced by those who affiliate with no religion.* We are not apologists for any institution or organization.

After a long-term study of Bishop Butler from the point of view of various disciplines, we have concluded that Butler, his editors, his publishers, his scholarly commentators, his lecture-hall teachers, his general readers, and reviewers have put together a package potentially of use to honest inquirers. If this material works out for you, we are delighted but not surprised. If you find it tedious, useless, and generally much ado about nothing, we are sorry but not surprised. If you dismiss the enterprise on the grounds that no one has ever heard of Bishop Butler, we are speechless, but, again, not surprised.

Butler would have answered the classic question, can virtue be taught? in common sense terms because he consistently appeals to commonsense if such an answer is possible. Butler points out that children are disciplined and trained in school. In many cases, they have sober parents of good character. Church, state, family, friends, and neighbors all work to instill principles of virtue and religion. Perhaps most importantly, children grow up surrounded by adults who set a good example of how to live according to the right rule of life. (SS 1745.14) In the commonsense way favored by Butler, of course virtue can be taught. So now we might ask whether virtue can be taught by one who is not virtuous at all? This is a bit of a trick question since Butler puts such emphasis on the wholistic nature of teaching. The parents, friends, family, neighbors, schoolteachers, clergy, government officials, artists, craft people, and merchants are all faculty members in the school of life teaching children how to live. The delivery of virtue from one generation to the next is by means of the cumulative effect of the natural and social environment on the child. Hope of reward and fear of punishment are important but so is insight, integrity, and perseverance. If the child is born into a corrupt, perverse, or dysfunctional situation, there is little hope of a virtuous adult being the result. Perhaps we should rephrase the question and ask instead can virtue be taught by one who is virtuous but not perfectly so? Butler's concern was with a somewhat different issue, can virtue be taught (learned) in a world that seems not to be virtuous, not to exhibit a just moral economy? Put this way, Butler's answer would be a resounding affirmative. If we see the world in which we dwell as probationary, as a

place of temptation, trial, and testing, then for the learning experience to be fully effective we must see this world as possibly the creation of a powerful, wise, and benevolent deity. Most of us do see the natural world as a school for character at least some of the time, but other features of our experience tell a different story. Are we faced with an unresolvable duck-rabbit, a figure that can appear as a duck or as a rabbit depending on how we look at it? Butler provides us with four types of examples, from the natural world, from the study of human nature, from the study of scripture, and from an examination of the integrity of our institutions. To learn virtue is to develop as a human being into an adult person of character who habitually lives in a virtuous and pious manner, respecting the natural law, the law within us. The prudent sociopath who is motivated by hope of reward and fear of punishment may be able to mimic the virtuous person, but persons of character will do what is right and good and just because such acts are right and good and just and not merely out of hope of reward or fear of punishment. So the challenge that Butler took upon himself was to point the way to virtue by showing people that we can see the world as a whole as a school for character, as a process of conditioning that is essential in order for us to become what we most desire to be, as humans who while still human are able to imitate the divine life. It is hard to see how a vicious person could play much of a role in a school of virtue. If there are any teachers of virtue, they will have to be imperfectly virtuous if they are human. For Christians, of course, the example of Jesus Christ is preeminent, and whole Christ may be essential for realization of one's full humanity, we cannot see that virtue is the exclusive property of any religion or religious tradition.

1 **Outline of Butler's Life**

Early on Butler determined the business of his life was to search for truth, especially truth regarding the rule of life, and he determined that becoming a priest in the Church of England was the best way for him to carry out his vocation of truth seeking.

Career	**Publications**
Born 18 May 1692, Wantage, England	
Education	
Latin school in Wantage, by an Anglican priest, Philip Barton	
1711 (or 1712) to 1714, dissenting academy in Gloucester, then Tewkesbury, by Samuel Jones	
4 November1713	First letter to Clarke
10 November 1713	First reply
23 November 1713	Second letter to Clarke
28 November 1713	Second reply
5 December 1713	Third letter to Clarke
10 December 1713	Third reply
16 December 1713	Fourth letter to Clarke
29 January 1713/14	Fourth reply
3 February 1713/14	Fifth letter to Clarke
4 February 1713/14	
8 April 1714	Fifth reply
Three weeks after departure,	6th letter to Clarke BL, Add. Mss. 4370, f.5 (copy)
17 March 1714/15	Conforms to Church of England and Matriculates at Oriel College
1716	*Letters to Clarke* published in London (Butler's name not disclosed)
30 September 1717	Seventh letter to Clarke
3 October 1717	Reply to seventh letter
6 October 1717	Eighth letter to Clarke
Oct 1717	Reply to the eighth letter
10 October 1717	Ninth letter to Clarke BL, Add Mss 12,101
Bachelor of Arts (BA), 11 October 1718.	Oriel College, Oxford;

Career in the Church

Ordained a deacon by William Talbot, Bishop of Salisbury, 26 October 1718	
Ordained a priest by Bishop Talbot, at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, 21 December 1718	
Appointed preacher at the Rolls Chapel, London, 1719 by Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls	*Fifteen Sermons,* 1726, 1729
Awarded Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) degree 10 June 1720	
prebendary, Salisbury Cathedral, 1721-38	
rector, Haughton-le-Skerne, 1722-1725	
rector, Stanhope, 1725-40	*Analogy of Religion,* 1736
Awarded Doctor of Civil Law (DCL) degree 8 December1733 [9]	
prebendary, Rochester, 1733-40	
chaplain to the lord chancellor, 1733-36	
clerk of the closet to Caroline, 1736-37	
bishop of Bristol, 1738-50	
16 February 1738/39	Soc Propagation of the Gospel sermon
Summer, 16 and 18 August, 1739	Meetings with John Wesley
Monday in Easter week1740	The London Hospitals sermon
1740 elected Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral	
30 January1740/41	Martyrdom of King Charles I sermon
9 May 1745	London Charity Schools sermon
11 June 1747	On Accession Day sermon
31 March 1748	London Infirmary Sermon
Prince Bishop of Durham, 1750-52	The Durham Charge, 1751

[9] George Croly notes in the introduction to his edition of the *Analogy*: "Bishop Butler's academic title has been printed LL D but it has been altered in the present volume on the suggestion of the correspondent who has been already alluded to and who thus writes In many copies of the *Analogy* and on his tombstone in the cathedral his title is given as LLD but a literary friend of Butler's own college (Oriel) informs me that it should be D C L (Doctor of Civil Law) the university not having had the power of conferring degrees in Canon Law for some centuries The Registrar of the college confirms his statement; and I see the degree given as DCL in a printed volume of the Oxford Graduates since 1641,"

	Plan for Anglican bishops in America. Butler helped to formulate a plan (1750), but it was not adopted.
Death in Bath, 1752	John Morgan-Guy (2018) concludes Butler died of irreversible liver failure caused by abdominal tuberculosis. Butler requires that his papers be destroyed.

Joseph Butler was born in Wantage, (Berkshire county in Butler's time, now Oxfordshire) the birthplace of King Alfred, in 1692.[10] The house, "the Priory," that was shown as the Butler birthplace during the nineteenth century, is certainly the family home, but there is no solid proof that Butler was born there. It is a beautiful house and is now in some danger of being sold to developers. He was the youngest of eight children of Thomas Butler (*d*. 1731).

Butler's first career move came while he was a student in Tewkesbury, at a Dissenting Academy kept by Mr. Samuel Jones. He sent correspondence to Samuel Clarke, considered the leading Anglican theologian of the day and closely associated with Isaac Newton regarding a proof of God's existence Clarke had presented in his Boyle lectures (1704-05). The exchange continued, and Clarke that was so impressed that he included Butler's letters with his replies in the next edition of his works (1716). The letters were sent anonymously, and we cannot be sure when Clarke first found out who Butler was, but he certainly knew by the time Butler had enrolled at Oriel College, Oxford, and engaged in some more correspondence. It is in these later letters that Butler complains about how terrible Oxford University is and how he is not learning anything. He considered transferring to Cambridge but did not want to have to repeat terms, so he decided to finish at Oxford. By contrast, the surviving documents show that Butler's education at the Dissenting Academy was excellent and served him well throughout his life even though he conformed to the Church of England, i.e., affiliated with the church the dissenters were dissenting from.

Of course, to pursue a career in divinity at Oxford or Cambridge at that time, Butler had to conform to the Church of England. His family is said to have been English Presbyterian, but that designation does not tell us a great deal about what his early life was like. Again, with the help of Clarke and of Bishop Talbot, the father of one of his college friends, Butler landed a particularly good first position.

Butler became the preacher at the Rolls Chapel in 1719 on the recommendation of Samuel Clarke and Edward Talbot, Butler's friend from Oriel. He had been ordained a priest in 1718. The Rolls Chapel was in the legal district of London on the estate of the Master of the Rolls, Sir Joseph Jekyll, the third most senior judge of England. The office of Master of the Rolls

[10] The mini biography that follows draws on an article originally published in *Verbum* at St. John Fisher College.

still exists today, but the chapel was pulled down over a century ago since it was in such poor repair. Visitors to King's College in London can still see some stained glass that was saved from the chapel. Most of the sermons Butler preached during his tenure at the Rolls have been lost, but he did publish fifteen of them, appropriately titled *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel.* Butler tells us not to try to figure out why he picked the ones he did or why they are in the order in which they were first published. We can only wonder why he tells us not to do something that probably few people would have thought of doing were it not prohibited. Taking the Rolls preachership and getting the sermons published was Butler's second big career move. The copies of the first (1726) and second (1729) editions are now extremely rare, but fortunately they can be read on microfilm or online. The published sermons caught the attention of David Hume, who included Butler on his list of the founders of modern moral theory.

When Butler's major treatise appeared in print ten years after the sermons, the sermons were generally considered merely as illustrations of the *Analogy of Religion* (1736). Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one of the first to try to reverse this tendency, but even as recently as the 1920s there were complaints about the sermons not being attended to sufficiently. Today, however, the sermons, or at least the five most favored of the fifteen, are readily available in anthologies and in paperback editions. They are the only sermons in English that are routinely studied in secular classes in moral philosophy. By the time the first edition of the Rolls sermons appeared, Butler had moved north to become rector of Stanhope[11]. Because of the income from mining in the area, this was known as the "Golden Rectory". The relation of the property on Front Street in Stanhope known as Bishop Butler's House to Butler's actual residence is not clear. Little is known about how Butler wrote his most famous work, *The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed, to the Course and Constitution of Nature* (1736) during this period. Any information we could glean from his papers is lost because in his will, he ordered that all his papers be destroyed. His library was sold piece by piece soon after his death. We have some anecdotes, but no knowledge of where, how, or when he worked or what or who he consulted while he worked. There is an old story, and it must be true to some degree, that he reworked material from sermons not used in *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls*. The *Analogy* contains an appendix, "A Dissertation on Virtue," that somewhat modifies the ethical doctrine of the sermons. There is the most overlap on the topic of human ignorance. The topic of ignorance is crucial for Butler since he is trying to evaluate the same evidence that has been available to everyone for a long time.

Edward Talbot, Butler's friend at Oriel, had died young, but Butler became chaplain to his brother, by then the Lord High Chancellor. This is how Butler gained entry to the court. Queen Caroline continued in England what was unusual there but common back in Hanover, a gathering of advanced male thinkers around a woman of prominence. Butler was included for a time in this group, his person and his work found favor with the Queen, and on her deathbed, she

[11] In FS.pref.45 Butler refers to "a course of eight years" at the Rolls, but eight years is difficult to reconcile with his starting date of 1719 and the publication date of the first edition of the sermons.

urged that Butler be made a bishop. According to Bartlett it was at these meetings arranged by Caroline that Berkeley and Butler got to know each other.

When Butler became bishop of Bristol[12], he took on a diocese that cost more in expenses than it paid in income. He was therefore allowed to continue as rector of Stanhope until he became dean of St. Paul's, in London, which provided him with a good income, much of which he used in Bristol for the diocese. Eighty years after Butler's death much of what he left in Bristol was destroyed in the Reform Riots, including the controversial marble cross he set up in his private chapel. At that time crosses were not common in protestant churches in Britain. There is now little to see in Bristol that is related to Butler's life. Today in Bristol one can see the elaborate memorial to Butler in the cathedral, and the Butler Tower, so called because the funds for it were raised in memory of when Butler was bishop there. What remains of the bishop himself is now under the floor of the cathedral, near the high altar. The inscribed stone on the floor is badly warn, so most visitors, nearly all in fact, walk over Bishop Butler's grave without being aware they are doing so.

Philosophically, what is most important about this period in Butler's life is that he published six of his sermons "preached on public occasions." Two of these sermons were delivered to the House of Lords, of which as a bishop he was a member, and the other four were given in London churches to solicit contributions for charities. These public occasions may not sound like promising philosophical works, but the sermons, along with his charge to the clergy at Durham, provide us with the main points of Butler's views on institutional integrity. The sermons on human nature (FS 1-3) do not make clear how important formal institutions are for Butler's understanding of how we ought to live. He often distinguishes between our private life and our public life, but only in these later sermons does he spell out how he sees such institutions as the various charities, hospitals, missions, civil government, education, and the church itself.

After the *Analogy of Religion* was published in 1736, Butler made some generally inconsequential changes and brought out a second edition that same year. After that second edition of the *Analogy*, he did not publish any work beyond what was specifically expected of him as a sitting bishop of the Church of England, i.e., these "public" sermons and the charge at Durham.

Butler did eventually become bishop of Durham. This position brought him back to the North Country where he had his parish at Stanhope years before. At that time, the bishop of Durham was a prince bishop with greater political powers than other bishops since the area was considered a border state.[13] Despite his early death and short stay at Durham he made a large and positive impression on those around him. For example:

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[12] Ecclesiastical appointments were political until 19th century.

[13] "Taking the unusual power of the crown and the cloak wielded by the Prince Bishops of Durham as their starting point, Ní Ríain and Dale present INTONE, an installation piece comprising music, poetry and sculpture. The work reflects on the powerful public roles these men held and considers the imagined private world of worry that permeates the minds of men of faith who have had political responsibility thrust upon them. The piece combines Ní Ríain's new

> BUTLER, who was predecessor to the present Bishop of Durham, being applied to on some occasion for a charitable subscription, asked his steward what money be had in the house. The steward informed him, 'there was five hundred pounds.' 'Five hundred pounds!' said the Bishop 'what a shame for a Bishop to have such a sum in his possession!' and ordered it all to be immediately given to the poor. That spirit of charity and benevolence which possessed this excellent man hath not appeared in any other part of the hierarchy since the beginning of the present century.[14]

When Butler became ill, he was taken to Bath, where he died in 1752. The waters did not work any better for him than it did for his friend, Bishop Berkeley. The building where Butler died is marked, but it is some blocks from the usual tourist trail and can be difficult to find.

At his death, Butler had his papers destroyed. His library was sold off, but with very few exceptions it has been impossible to trace or reconstruct. It is doubtful that much new information about Butler's life will be discovered or that a proper biography will ever be written.

> A catalogue of the libraries of the Right Revd. Dr. Butler, late Lord Bishop of Durham, at T. Osborne's in Gray's-Inn. And will continue selling every day till the first of October 1753.

So far Butler's life and work have been presented as a chronology followed by a brief narrative. To understand and apply Butler's ideas requires a broader view. Understanding Butler's perspective requires at least some acquaintance with the larger narrative of which he is a part.

This grand narrative may seem pathologically grandiose to some, but seeing this vision as a whole and as much as possible as Butler saw it is essential to our comprehension of Butler's self-understanding and of the force he attributes to his arguments. It includes the beginning of the world, the emergence of life in whatever form. and as the human species. The many and various

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music composed for trumpet, performed by Brendan Ball, of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra with a set of her poems inspired by portraits of the Prince Bishops. These same portraits were also the point of departure for Dale's sculptural works which re-imagine the Prince Bishops' robes—such a potent public symbol of their power – as a delicate almost skeletal framework upon which their worries and insecurities might more readily hang. From 1075, the Prince Bishops were given powers enabling them to: hold their own parliament, raise their own armies, appoint sheriffs and Justices, administer their own laws, levy taxes and customs duties, create fairs and markets, issue charters, salvage shipwrecks, collect revenue from mines, administer the forests and mint their own coins. Indeed, the Prince Bishops lived like kings in their 'palaces' in Durham City and Bishop Auckland." (https://vimeo.com/70290492)

[14] Henry Brougham, Review of King, *Memoirs*; *Edinburgh Review* 32 (July 1819) 74-88

peoples, societies, civilizations, and their associations are all intrinsic to the human nature that was Butler's main concern. For Butler, for all Jews and Christians, and for many others of a spiritual inclination, the selection of the ancient Hebrew people is of significance. Out of the ancient Jews and their way of life Jesus comes in for special attention by all Christians and certainly Butler. In this narrative there follows a recapitulation of the larger human story with the origin and growth of the early Christian communities, a development on which Butler laid emphasis. All of this and of what follows can and should be studied using the methods of the secular sciences, both physical and social. The Butler narrative continues as Christian missions moved through Europe and on to Britain, where they encountered the Celts. Eventually the pagan Saxons converted to Christianity. The church thrived on English soil, the church in England became the Church of England established, and the Book of Common Prayer and the King James Version of the Bible became the best-known presentations of Christianity in English. The Butler narrative continues with his later reception in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and America. In latter chapters we will have recourse to this image, will document its presence in Butler's work, and will associate it with the prime metaphor found in so many works by others, especially when associated the oceans of the earth, the river of life, the stream of consciousness, and Butler's concept of personal identity. Readers of *Moby-Dick* have to continue for many pages before they appreciate the "flow" of the first chapter in which the people of Manhattan stream to the ocean line drawn by a mysterious attraction and, if as attentive as Ismael, are able to glimpse Moby Dick making his entrance: "The great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, mid most of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air."

Butler never married and left no direct descendants. Except for the suggestion that sex is a pleasure to be pursued in moderation and that adultery is unacceptable, he had nothing to say regarding the questions, burning in our time, of human sexuality, its varieties, its essence, its value, and its regulation, but he had a lot to say about the drinking and rioting that may seem in our self-interest initially but which ends up doing much harm. The principle of moderation, of taking self-love, benevolence, and conscience as our guides to life will, in the end maximize our happiness. As we will show in what follows, we cannot *assume* the virtuous life is also a life in our best interest, to do so would be to beg the question, but then, we cannot prove the benefits of virtue without engaging in rhetorical *non sequiturs.* Butler's solution to this classic dilemma was to show that there is a presumption in favor of the world being ruled by a just moral economy and that the objections to such a providential scheme (his word) while formidable prove upon critical examination to be insufficient to over throw our hopes and fears of cosmic justice. It follows that when the probability is calculated correctly we not only can but should pursue the life of virtue and piety with all the vigor, wholehearted determination, and resilience that would be the case if the outcome were certain.

2. Ethics and Religion

Introduction

> Butler's ethics is biblical:
>
> > And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [Deuteronomy 6:5] This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [Leviticus 19:18] On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." [Matthew 22:35-40]

In presenting the basic principle of ethics, Butler quotes from Jesus as Jesus was quoting from the law. Some people believe that religion needs a philosophical foundation. The needs of such people have been addressed over the centuries, and we cannot hope to improve on that work. Others, perhaps many more, believe religion needs no help from philosophy. To question religion's need of philosophy is like questioning the need for lifeboats on a ship. If all goes well, as it almost always does, there is no need for the lifeboats, but if the ship gets in trouble not only is there need for the lifeboats, but there is no time to go back and get them. The lifeboats must be available and ready for use even if they are never used. Thus out of the troubles and discontents of normal religious practice we see apologists rise up to answer objections voiced against the religion, we see a philosophical theology (or natural theology) that helps to close the gap between what we experience in this world and what we are taught in our religion, and finally we develop a philosophy of religion to manage large scale objections such as the nature of religion itself, the role of appeals to consistency or rationality in discussing religion, and the claims of those who think religion has be proved false or at least diminished by the prevalence of evil, pain, and suffering, or by the phenomenal success of the sciences, especially the natural sciences. By the accident of birth, Butler was a successor to Locke, Hobbes, Boyle, Newton, and Clarke, but is included on the list of the founders of modern moral science, that is the experientially based study of human nature. All of our investigations in art, science, politics, and history seem to depend on either a prior study of human nature (what we can know, what we should do, what we can hope for) undertaken in a rigorous, determined and disciplined manner or at least on a basket of presumptions about the nature of the species.

Butler in no way suggests that philosophy is needed for the life of virtue and piety in any general way. The point is that in his time and in ours we are faced with a world and our human condition in that world, a ruined world as Butler would say, in which many of us are non-compliant with the specifics of the Great Commandment and with the general requirements of virtue and piety. Given that the moral inadequacy of humanity is obvious, we go on to ask for the explanation for our wretched state and to inquire after a possible remedy.

The challenge for the preacher, any preacher, is to bring together the teachings of their most authoritative received scripture with the inclinations of good will and common sense, of conscience, we all feel, to clear away whatever reservations, inhibitions, or distractions might remain and thereby release those who have made the pursuit of truth, of true humanity, the business of their lives.

Butler remains famous for his solution to the most salient of these problems.

- In the first three of the *Fifteen Sermons* he discusses self-love.
- Sermons 4, 5, and 6 are a bridge to our relations with others.
- Sermons 7-10 take up two specific impediments to the ethical life, self-deception, and resentment.
- Sermons 11 and 12 are on "the love of our neighbor," with the Romans 13:9 version of the injunction as the header.
- Sermons 13 and 14, on the love of God, are both on Matthew 22:37.

In Butler's view,

- God is the creator and governor of the world.
- All that we have we hold in trust for the original intent of the primary creative act.
- Every aspect of the natural world is derivative of God.
- Our human constitution is derivative of God.
- All that we do as individuals or as social beings is derivative of God.

If we take seriously all these attributions to divinity, we are faced with the *problem of evil* in a pressing and practical way. The modern atheist/secularist will of course claim the problem of evil is easily solved by taking God out of the equation. Butler's answer would be that one of the reasons we have for believing in God as creator, governor and redeemer is that the existence of God provides the best and simplest explanation for the observed order of nature. One view or the other may prevail in the end, but there is no merit in the view that there is an easy or quick way out of the problem of evil, which may serve us as a paradigm of the various objections that have been raised to a religious understanding of ethics from antiquity.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to showing that Butler was steering a true course in taking seriously the obligation of Christians to give reasons for their faith and to avoid the temptation of a worldly atheism on the one hand and of a fideistic religion on the other. The rational atheist claims that the admitted problems in religion (with or without a revelation) are sufficient to suppress any inclination we might have to be religious, and the irrational religionist counters by dismissing the rule of reason to make way for the affirmation of faith. Both the atheists and the fideists want to claim their prize without having entered let alone run the race. For Butlerians (Anglican or not, Christian or not, theist or not), the whole tradition that has come down to the present authors from the original creative act as expressed in scripture and carried on through such people as Aristotle, Augustine, Dante, Bishop Butler, Emerson, Darwin, Thoreau, Marx, William James, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Freud, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, and Martin Luther King, is not intended to spare us the torment of ignorance, indecision, or indiscretion, but to see

the challenges of living as a human on Earth in the 21st century as a trial or test of our character. Our earthly probation is a peculiar sort of test in that we are not to expect that the test will measure our preexisting condition but that by submitting to the test our character will be formed into a better state and the whole of our lives redeemed by the same process.

The heritage we have received from nature and from culture is not to be understood in terms of ownership or privilege, but as a benefit entrusted to us as stewards that we might apply it in our lives, pass it on to others who are in want and need, and then all return to the source of our being what was the original intent. This Butlerian insight (that any dismissal of the problems of ethics and religion is dangerous and destructive) itself eliminates both atheism and fideism from contention as the rule of life the pursuit of which we have already identified as the principle goal of philosophical inquiry. The rule of life as understood here is nothing other than the essential link between ethics and religion and the conduct of day to day life.

Readers who are inclined to take seriously the philosophical investigation of religion and ethics and the practical pursuit of the life of piety and virtue may want to skip on to the next chapter. Those who are still inclined to dismiss the charges against religion or to dismiss God and religion without much of a trial, are invited to review the points made in the rest of this chapter.

Introduction (continued)

Most of us understand perfectly well why we should help our neighbors in distress. We do not need to love them to be willing to help them. The problem comes when we take seriously that God is our creator and governor and therefore is in a literal sense responsible for the distress.

For example, my neighbor is in distress. One of their children has accidentally killed a beloved pet cat. I happen to have the therapeutic training to help the family get through the tragedy. This is a good, even an exceptionally good, thing I have done. My neighbors in distress express their appreciation. The whole neighborhood is aware of what happened and grateful that I was able to help with the healing. So, under these circumstances, things have worked out if not well at least better than they would have otherwise. Can we seriously expect the family in distress to praise God for their having a good and effective neighbor? Is it at all appropriate for me to thank God for the opportunity to use my psycho-therapeutic skills to such good effect when the world certainly would have been an even better place had the cat not been harmed?

Butler makes various remarks on the problem of evil, but his main point is that the best we can do in the face of unredeemed suffering is to acknowledge that we do not know why such things have. What we know of God's original intent and of his superintendence of the world is but a point compared with what we do not know. Sermon 15 is devoted to the extent and the consequences of human ignorance, and then this theme is continued in Part I of the *Analogy.*

As a theorist Butler at best gives us enough to escape dejection, but on practical matters he excels. Those who see all of what they own as held in trust will stop clinging and hoarding and thing about the best distribution that will eventually be most satisfying for all. When we see

all that happens as a test of our character we are able to move beyond the injustice of it all, the whining and complaining, and get on with demonstrating the image of divinity that stands behind the character and conscience that has been given us, again, in trust.

Butler did not invent any of this. His contribution was to make the life of virtue and piety accessible to those who already had the good will needed to pursue that life, and he accommodated all sane people by insisting that there is no necessary conflict between loving our neighbors and loving ourselves, and that if we follow interpretive instructions provided by Butler and any number of other philosophically grounded preachers of various denominations, we will come to see that by making the quest for happiness the business of our life and aiming at a life of perfect virtue and piety we experience, far from conflict, an ultimate convergence. Professing such a vision while entertaining lingering doubts leaves us still trying to serve two masters.

The serious, rigorous, and determined kind of human living that any good God worthy of worship would make accessible to all who by nature are moral beings can be pursued with whole hearted commitment only if the objections, inhibitions, and distractions have been cleared away, and this clearing can only be done by the moral agent personally, along with, of course, a little help from friends, and with the full faith and practice of a religion of choice in submission to nature (God's creation and our environment) and to nature's God. This concise statement relating ethics and religion can be correlated with the precepts to:

- Concentrate on your own faith and practice, recognizing that all you have has been given to you to hold in trust in answer to a higher calling and not to make your life trouble free, comfortable, and admired by all.
- Honor all vows, promises, commitments, and covenants made except when there is an overriding conscientious objection. For example, if you borrow an axe from a friend with the promise to return it, you are going to renege on the promise if your friend has gone insane and announced a murderous intent.
- If you have found a congregation, teacher, or savior that has been beneficial you have an obligation to preach, testify, and in daily life exemplify this benefit to all who have shown a need and desire for such benefit for themselves

Even though Butler was working at an early phase of this new moral science, there is a complexity and balance to his architectonic that is intellectually, aesthetically, and practically pleasing. For example, he makes much of the supremacy of conscience in human nature, but he writes at equal length on self-deception and the potential for the conscience to be corrupted. He sets up self-love as a superior principle, but the affirms self-denial as needed for discipline if not for virtue and piety. He affirms benevolence as a superior principle, but denies benevolence is the whole of virtue, and then, in the famous and much discussed cool hour passage, he says that it will never be the case that we will deny ourselves unless doing so is in our (best, long term) interest or at least not against it.

Atheism, Theism, Deism.

We use conceptual analysis (critical study of Butler's ideas) to clear some of the main objections to virtue and to religion, i.e., to live the life of virtue and of religion. Inspired by William James' treatment of the once-born and the twice-born, the biblical concept of a second birth has become during our time the topic of widespread discussion. There has grown up a division between liberals who, following Rainer Maria Rilke, refer the need to *change one's life* and the conservatives who insist on the need to be *born again*. We aim to examine the more basic ideas as found in the works of Bishop Butler without favoring or disfavoring one group of contemporary partisans or the other. Butler's favored method was to present people with premises and leave them free to draw their own conclusions. Butler's analogical method precludes any presumption except those shared by all parties to the discussion. Readers are often disconcerted by Butler's appeal to a presumption, as if he were asking that the proposition be accepted with little, none, or at least insufficient proof. There is a plenary reply to any such objection. When Butler appeals to a presumption in his argumentation, he is appealing to presumptions accepted by his opponents. Since this is so, Butler's latter-day commentators have a perfect right to appeal to presumptions granted by their audience. For example, any attempt to dismiss or devalue Butler on the grounds of not sharing his Anglican assumptions, bias, or slant is misguided from the start. Those who are not part of the target to begin with cannot complain the archer missed them.

The earliest adherents of any philosophy or religion are breaking away from some aspect of the past and supporting some innovation. Since they are in some way deviating from the received order, they must bear the burden of proof. There is a presumption in favor of what is or is understood to have been the case in the past. But how is the burden of proof to be discharged? The burden is discharged by appeal to that which is already accepted by the audience. The appeal may be of two kinds: either to evidence and reason or to the thing itself under a representation. If I am trying to sell you a painting it will probably be a good idea to get you to examine the painting itself rather than read an essay on why you should buy the painting. Those who know about cars or computers may be more impressed by the description and presentation of evidence than getting a good look. Certainly, any advocate will want to be able to make all sorts of different appeals depending on the audience and the occasion. Butler correctly suggests atheism was not a great force in his time, but we cannot deny the significance of atheism even from ancient times.[15] Nor how present it is today. As in the case of C.S. Lewis, some of the great Christian apologists began as atheists.

The Christian apologist is responsible for addressing and answering all objections to Christianity. Since 'Christian' as used here refers to a way of life, the apologist must be able to answer from the point of view of any theology.

As used in this book, 'fideism' (as opposed to faith seeking understanding) refers to the whole school of thought that sees religious faith as independent of reason. Thus, we are talking

[15] See Tim Whitmarsh (2015) on Lucretius and ancient atheism, and Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 5.198-9.

about extreme or radical fideism. Appeal is made here to faith to the exclusion of reason and not to the moderate or mainstream fideism in which the advocate puts together a package of appeals to faith and to reason depending on what the audience and the occasion seem to demand. There are a vast number of fideists today despite the obvious difficulty that both reason and the capacity for faith are, for the theist, equally God given, equally to be used or abused, but in no case is one or the other to be discarded.

This book, in accord with Butler's work, aims not to exclude anyone with merely a sneer. Beginning in the 1960s and coming into its own in the 70s there has been an impressive revival of philosophy of religion, much of it led by analytic philosophers. In his 1960 paper on the ontological proof of God, Norman Malcolm opened the eyes of many to Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy of religion, often called Wittgensteinian fideism, although many Wittgensteinian fideists disavow the term. Much as the analytic people dislike and distrust the continental, the fact is that continental philosophy has had the greater influence in the arts and the social sciences. So, Malcolm writes in defense of the ontological argument of Anselm of Canterbury. His arguments follow the methods of Wittgenstein. Malcolm's opponents claim that his arguments are not arguments at all; they are question-begging professions of faith. For this, Malcolm is called a fideist, much as he insisted on denying the label.

The once popular understanding of Wittgensteinian fideism as precluding a philosophical critique of religion seems now bankrupt. At the very least we can see there are Wittgensteinian fideists who are Butlerian Anglicans and who see the philosophical criticism as an essential spiritual exercise in their search for truth. This is so because the Butlerian/Wittgensteinian Christian understands the great narrative as investigated by the physical and social sciences as also a manifestation of providence, a showing that calls for a response. Butler repeatedly refers to our being in a state of trial and of our willingness to submit to the will of God being essential to being in a state of religion. Wittgenstein dislikes and distrusts the language of test, trial, and probation regarding religion, but he obviously recognized such in the way of life he lived.

The most widely accepted categorical scheme in philosophy of religion is:

- Atheism
- Deism
- Theism
- Agnosticism

The terminology adopted here is not entirely lexical as reflecting actual use but is to a degree stipulative—intended to divide the field of thought into four exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories preventing us from trading on ambiguities however inadvertent.
Atheism is the denial of God or of any Governor of the World. Atheism in religion corresponds to anarchism, the denial of a legitimate temporal government, in ethics and politics. Butler maintains that the atheists have been sufficiently answered by many published proofs of God's existence**.** Butler never says he is assuming God's existence. What he says is that he is assuming

that God's existence has been proved. He had, of course, an intimate familiarity with Samuel Clarke's Boyle Lectures, and he provides a list of various other proofs of God that he endorsed. We are reading Butler not from the 1700s but from the 2000s, and we can no longer assume that the light has been turned out on atheism.[16] Much of what Butler says appeals to those who are already inclined to accept religion and ethics. Atheists and anarchists tend to be skeptical of governmental authority,[17] so Butler's robust theory of the natural, human conscience is well adapted to rebut atheists and anarchists who accept Butler's ethics even if they reject Butler's additional and independent claim that conscience is the image of God within us.

Deism (the Latin-based opposite of atheism) denies the denial and accepts that there is a God who governs. But that God does not communicate with us through any special revelation. Butler is best known for his refutation of deism, but he never uses the words "deist" or "deism." Like theism, there are many versions of deism.

Theism (the Greek based opposite of atheism) also denies atheism and accepts there is a God who governs but adds to God's existence that this God not only governs by being creator and ruler of nature but also communicates with the creation. (Unless otherwise indicated we are referring to Christian theism in this book.) Thus, it became a commonplace that there are two scriptures: the design of nature and holy books of revelation that have been delivered in writing. Butler is considered one of the great apologists speaking in defense of the Bible revelation.

This book presents Butler's defense of revelation, but our aim is to remove obstacles and deprive people of excuses for *staying alert* for revelation without necessarily insisting on the Biblical text as the only canonical candidate. The empirical religion such as advocated by Butler relies on our cumulative, collective, and critical experience of the world, asking always "how am I to live?" Moreover, Butler's ethical theory can be viewed as being independent of both Christianity and deism. It can rest on a material framework.

Agnosticism (not-knowing) is the denial of any knowledge of the truth or falsity of atheism, deism, and theism. Non-evidential or fideist appeals to authority or emotion are often used in theology or religious thought generally. The fideist accepts our lack of knowledge and is therefore an agnostic of sorts, but also rejects the biblical requirement of signs, reasons, and manifestations. Fideists are often successful in bringing about conversion, even genuine conversion, but they are worthless in apologetics, the answering of objections since they are defenseless against the charge of failure to present an evidential case. Our main point is not to argue for or against something that Butler or anyone else has said on these and other matters. Our main point is that once we observe the place religion and ethics has held in human life down

[16] In "An Argument for God's Existence." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 1979, David White has developed an argument for God in accord with Butler's methods but appropriate to our time.

[17] Anarchists deny government and atheists deny the divine foundations of governmental authority.

through the ages, we should recognize there is no easy way to dismiss the claims of religion and ethics but neither is there an easy way to accept those claims, especially when what is at stake is how we are to live day to day, in times of great stress, and over the whole arc of one's life.

On the contrary, those who are willing to so much as consider living a life of virtue and piety, an ethical and spiritual life, must be willing to lavish create moral and intellectual care and attention on all the issues that separate us from that life and from each other in the living.

Recent critics have stressed that Butler's best-known works are sermons and should be read as such, unusual, if not unique, in academic moral philosophy. Others have long read the undoubted sermons as having the form of philosophical essays. Unfortunately, there are no surviving records of how the sermons were originally received as preached in the Rolls Chapel or who made up the congregation.[18] There seems to be no reliable illustration of the interior or exterior of the Chapel when Butler was preacher. All we have from Butler's time is the schedule of services, the sermons as edited for publication, and the fact that printings vary from edition to edition.

Context matters, liturgical, philosophical, and architectural. For example, David Hume, often understood as one of Butler's leading critics, acknowledges the quality of Butler's sermons by including Butler in a list of moralists of eminence: Mr. Locke, my Lord Shaftsbury, Dr. Mandeville, Mr. Hutchinson, Dr. Butler, &c." in his explanatory footnote to a passage in the "Introduction" to his *Treatise*, which should perhaps be quoted in fall:

> "And as the science of man is the-only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation. It is no astonishing reflection to consider, that the application of experimental philosophy to moral subjects should come after that to natural at the distance of above a whole century; since we find in fact, that there was about the same interval betwixt the origins of these sciences; and that reckoning from THALES to SOCRATES, the space of time is nearly equal to that betwixt, my Lord Bacon and some late philosophers [referring to the list of names] in England, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing, and have engaged the attention, and excited the curiosity of the public."

[18] The Rolls Chapel, where Butler preached, was located on the estate of the Master of the Rolls, so it seems logical to infer that lawyers formed a good part of the congregation. We have been unable to find contemporary records to confirm this.

It is easy to show that regardless of contemporary and later interpretation, all of Butler's works were written with specific regard to his career as a priest, that is, as one working with pastoral intent.[19]

> The sermons collected as *Fifteen Sermons* (1726) were preached in the *Rolls* Chapel in *Chancery Lane*, London, at some time between 1719 and 1726. The Rolls was so called because it became a repository of charters, patents, commissions, and other material made up of rolls of parchment. There remain few clues as to when or how the sermons were delivered. No manuscripts survive. nor does there appear to be any surviving primary evidence of who might have sat in the congregation. The usual schedule was: Prayers and Sermon are every *Sunday* Morning in Term Time at 10, and only Prayer at 3, and on Holydays at 10 and 3; Sacrament every second *Sunday* of the 4 Terms, on *Christmas day, Easter Sunday,* and *Whitsunday*.[20]

In a sense, Butler was merely doing his job by delivering his sermons on ethics, but with hindsight we can see that even in his time he was not just doing his job but conducting and directing a business. As stated previously, but worth repeating here, the business of life is to search for *truth unashamed* to learn from anyone. (C4.3) The supreme object of this search is the *rule of life.* Butler announces his project at the very beginning of the Preface (1729). It is to answer, "the important question, what is the rule of life?" (P 1). His answer is that we have "obligations to the practice of virtue" (P 12). By this he seems to mean that we have *overriding reasons* to live virtuously and to comply with the requirements of morality. However, the aim behind Butler's project is not philosophical. He is a preacher, and his arguments are sermons. Thus, his aim is homiletic and therefore pastoral. He argues that we have "obligations to the practice of virtue" as a way of exercising spiritual care for his congregation, by strengthening their disposition to lead a virtuous life.[21]

William Blake summed up the process of living the life of virtue and religion with the phrase "empire follows art," and Henry James maintained that "art makes life," which Butler covered with the notions of a system and a cumulative case. This notion is critical for the

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[19] Whether his works are all sermons is a somewhat different question. The letters to Clarke are neither sermons nor pastoral. Some commentators have speculated that the fifteen chapters of the *Analogy* were reworked from sermons delivered for publication as a treatise. The rest of Butler's works were delivered as sermons or as a charge to the clergy.

[20] Stow, William. *Remarks on London: Being an Exact Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, Borough of Southwark, and the Suburbs and Liberties Contiguous to Them*… London: Norris and Tracy, 1722, pp. 121-22.

[21] Ralph Wedgwood, "Butler on Virtue, Self-Interest and Human Nature" in *Morality and Self-Interest*, ed. Paul Bloomfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 177-204.

appreciation of Butler's apologetic strategy. Although obviously related to the tradition of the monastic rule, for Butler the rule was more a vision than verbal or quantitative.

For Butler as a Christian the vision that guides life cannot be nature as it appears at first, but only after its meaning has been read, and of course, this reading can be carried out only to a slight degree since we humans are largely ignorant of what the world is all about. Those who read too much into the observed world are in danger of becoming "enthusiastic," or "superstitious." The vision that Butler proposes to be guided by emerges from inference in the form of a cumulative case[22] bounded by self-conscious awareness of our ignorance, and not by superstitious or enthusiastic practice that oversteps the bounds of evidence, of the natural, the lawful.

Working primarily with Butler's ideas as previewed below, the aim is to relate the ideas listed to Butler's text and its reception, to real-life situations and projects, to literary and artistic paradigms, and to each other.

Probable evidence is required for meeting a sufficient degree of probability. Butler's conditions of total evidence presented as a cumulative case, are analogous with prior commitments of science or ordinary reasoning and common sense. If we cannot cite your own precedent against you, the case is lost, except in cases of insanity. Appeal to a person's previous statements is usually successful as long as the opponent cannot deny having indicated a prior assent. One way out is by appeal to insanity, since we do not ordinarily hold people responsible for what they say or do when an insanity defense is available. Thus, Butler's method requires continuous revision. Forensic reasoning begins with a resolution ("the question") which is open (not yet determined), forced (cannot be debated forever), and momentous (not some silly or trivial matter). The advocates then present their evidence with strict instructions not to falsify or suppress any relevant evidence. The evidence is tranced back to a premise ("first said") that speaks for itself and needs no additional grounding. A useful tactic is to use as one's premises points already stipulated (accepted) by the opposition, Butler is famous for helping himself to premises granted by the opposition even if he did not accept those propositions. Throughout the disputation but especially in the final summation the advocates strive to "paint a picture" or "create at vision" by weaving the evidence that has survived cross-examination into a substantial cumulative case that proves convincing as regards which answer to the question is actionable. What degree of probability is actionable? For Butler, a demonstrative argument need not be beyond all doubt, but probability, he says, admits of degrees. Many people assume that an

[22] "…follow the great modernists in building …[an] associative structure from which an unstated central thesis might be allowed to emerge as a strong cumulative pattern or sense." A description of Charles Olson's form of argumentation proposed by Tom Clark in his *Charles Olson: The Allegory of a Poet's Life.* New York: Norton, 1991, p. 101. Butler mentions his preference for unstated conclusions in the 1729 "Preface" to *Fifteen Sermons,* outlines the present state of logic in the "Introduction" to the *Analogy,* and explains the importance of the cumulative case in A.2.7.2.

actionable answer to the question must be at least more likely than not. Butler maintains that the actionable may be far less than an even chance if it is more likely than any alternative. For example, a young person goes to a dance hall in hopes of finding a soul mate. Looking around the room, this young person guesses the chances of finding a soul mate here are about 1 in 100. That does not sound promising but suppose our soul mate seeker has been around and knows that other meet-up places in the neighborhood offer 1000 to 1 or worse. So, if the question is "Where should I spend this evening in search of a soulmate?" the only logical answer is to stay put at the place where the odds are 100 to 1. Butler does not cite Pascal, but commentators have noticed the similarity in their reasoning. William James added an important modification. James pointed out that when we play at long odds in a social situation, we are not stuck with odds determined by others as we would be at the racetrack. On the dance floor one has many opportunities to change partners or to increase or decrease one's appeal to the present partner.

Because of Butler's logical presentation J N D Kelly has described Butler as "*Aristotle clad in a diaphanous mantle* of Christianity". (cited Sprague (1967) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, I.433), and Edith Hall sets out at length how-to live-in accord with Aristotelianism today (*Aristotle's Way: How Ancient Wisdom Can Change Your Life*, 2019).)

The whole of Butler's work concerns the injunction to live in accord with piety and virtue as the rule of life. The injunction is tautological. Of course, we should follow nature, our human nature at least, and show respect for ourselves, our neighbors, and for whatever superior powers we acknowledge.

Those who disrespect themselves or others are unlikely to be happy and may become a threat to themselves or others. Those who acknowledge a deity in words but show no respect in practice are hypocrites. Considered as a normative scheme there is no logical space to disagree with Walter Scott's dying words:

> When Walter Scott was dying, he called his son-in-law, Mr. Lockhart, to him, and said, "Lockhart, I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man; be virtuous——be religious——be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."

Philosophy, as least pastoral philosophy, needs to mind its own business and concentrate on explicating what the life of piety and virtue amounts to in practice and more generally replying to any excuses people may have proposed in an effort to excuse their failure to live in accord with piety and virtue. Excuses come in many varieties, and certainly some are legitimate. The whole range of objections to piety and virtue are called excuses to expose their negative implications for practice; excuses relate directly to action and inaction. Excuses go beyond mere talk or expression of intellectual doubts.

Butler was a preacher, a pastor, and a bishop. He presumed, and had every right to presume, that people reading or listening to him had already accepted in principle the normative scheme but, whether they admitted it or not, had failed in some aspect of the

execution. Some were lacking in courage or confidence. Some were seduced by powerful passions. Others were confused about what was the proper practice of virtue and piety or had been misled by erroneous theories of God or of human nature. Followers of Butler see human life as a project aimed at living in accord with the human good.

People make all kinds of excuses and raise all kinds of objections that prevent them from attaining a right relationship with self, others, and the ultimate. Butler did what he could to clear the apparent obstacles to living in accord with the natural expression of piety and virtue. Organizing Butler's material (over the three centuries from his first publication in 1716 on to today) as a system of excuse deprivation addressed to those on trial allows us to see the whole as pastoral philosophy, an effort to coach people on how to pass the test, the test of how to live in the natural and the human worlds. The whole of Butler's work concerns issues arising from the practice of the Walter Scott injunction be good, be virtuous——be religious——be good. As a preacher, pastor, and bishop Butler did what he could remove objections and obstacles to the practice of piety and virtue, to seeing piety and virtue as the rule of life that best accords with nature and that is most likely to deliver the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

The aim of his book is not to rehearse the details of the normative scheme or to refute those who are virtuous and pious without help from philosophy. The aim rather is to expose Butler's methods and ideas to a new generation leaving them to make of it what they will. Butler saw himself as a relay station between the ancient wisdom of the past and the modern world as understood and interpreted by the classic British moralists and the standard Anglican divines, two of the various streams of thought that ran through Butler's life.

Chapters 14 and 15 use what we know of Butler's life, times, sources, text, and reception to extend the discussion of his text on into the future.[23] Obstacles to piety and virtue that have been raised in the past and are likely to reappear include:

- That our human nature is not adapted to the life of piety and virtue, or that humans do not have a moral nature.
- That whatever the powers that be are they are not omnipotent and benevolent, and no defense of God against the evil of the world is possible.
- That no good sense can be made of the responsible self whose identity extends not only throughout a person's life in this world but potentially continues into a future life.

[23] John Dewey was one of the best known and well respected American philosophers of his day, but he shocked his naturalistic followers and failed to satisfy supernaturalists when in Dewey (1934) he ends his Terry Lectures with the injunction to make the common faith explicit and militant, which is what we intend here. We are using Butler as a point of what we know to cast a wide net into what we do not know.

- That simple observations of ordinary life show the social world does not favor virtue, and that even the most heinous evils can go unpunished.
- That ought implies can, that I cannot be responsible for acts that are beyond my control, and therefore if we have no liberty of action because freewill itself is an illusion, as many now claim, then moral responsibility is also illusory and attempting to live the ethical life is futile.
- That human free will is illusory and that without liberty to act otherwise we cannot be considered morally responsible. An agent is said to have freewill just in case the agent can will to have done otherwise and as a result of so willing actually do otherwise or contrary to what the agent did do. If an agent lacks free will and is not able to do otherwise on account of physical restraints, chemical or psychological controls, then the agent cannot be held morally responsible for the action. Moral responsibility for any action requires that the agent who performed the action could have done otherwise, and those who lack moral responsibility will also be unable to practice virtue since virtue in the morally relevant sense presupposes the ability to do otherwise.
- That natural knowledge such as we have does not extend to matters of good and evil, and that there is no credible source of a revelation available beyond natural means. That there is no common, received morality, or to whatever extent there is it is better explained by natural, non-normative factors.

Many commentators have claimed Butler assumed God's existence. They fail to distinguish between taking for granted without proof that God exists, something Butler never does, and presuming that the various proofs of God have been successful since they have not been refuted. After all, he was writing in opposition to the deists, who by definition, accepted God's existence. Anyone who bothers to look at the text can see that Butler neither assumes God's existence nor does he attempt to prove there is an intelligent author of nature. In Butler's own words.

> This method then of concluding and determining being practical, and what, if we will act at all, we cannot but act upon in the common pursuits of life; being evidently conclusive, in various degrees, proportionable to the degree and exactness of the whole analogy or likeness; and having so great authority for its introduction into the subject of religion, even revealed religion; my design is to apply it to that subject in general, both natural and revealed: taking for proved, that there is an intelligent author of nature, and natural governor of the world. For as there is no presumption against this prior to the proof of it: so it has been often proved with accumulated evidence; from this argument of analogy and final causes; from abstract reasonings; from the most antient tradition and testimony; and from the general consent of mankind. Nor does it appear, so far as I can find, to be denied,

> by the generality of those who profess themselves dissatisfied with the evidence of religion. (AR.intro.8)

"Taking for proved" is very different from "taking for granted," and Butler removes any doubt by listing five different types of proof in the *Analogy*.

Our book is in the form of a monograph but is intended to serve as a record of the discussion regarding the work of Bishop Butler as a moralist and theologian. The aim is to allow access to this discussion as widely as possible. A later chapter acknowledges the importance of digital technology for the future of the discussion, especially regarding who is party to the discussion, how we are to understand personal identity and moral responsibility, and the implications of automation and the use of artificial intelligence. Thoughts along these lines were anticipated by Freud in his *Civilization and its Discontents*:

> Long ago he formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience which he embodied in his gods. To these gods he attributed everything that seemed unattainable to his wishes, or that was forbidden to him. One may say, therefore, that these gods were cultural ideals. Today he has come very close to the attainment of this ideal, he has almost become a god himself. Only, it is true, in the fashion in which ideals are usually attained according to the general judgement of humanity. Not completely; in some respects, not at all, in others only halfway. Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they fall giving him much trouble at times. Nevertheless, he is entitled to console himself with the thought that this development will not come to an end precisely with the year 1930 A.D. Future ages will bring with them new and probably unimaginably great advances in this field of civilization and will increase man's likeness to God still more. But in the interests of our investigations, we will not forget that present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character. (p. 91)

And Teilhard sees "creation as having entered time and space at an alpha point. From there a great chain of being unfolds with increasing complexification of levels of consciousness. From the lithosphere emerges the biosphere, and from the biosphere emerges the noosphere (sphere of mind). Consciousness further evolves until it reaches the highest state which he called the omega point." (MacGill, 2009)

Thus, the God who always was there, always had accommodated the divine self-expression to human understanding in response to an antecedent faith, now becomes fully manifest, not necessarily a matter of evidence so much as of becoming evident in the sense of certain and undeniable. Butler continued to work with the Platonic conflict of the passions that could be tamed by the Good only when each tended to the work it was best suited to by nature,

and the philosophers ruled as kings. Butler and Marcus Aurelius are probably the only historical philosophers to have ruled as kings. (Butler was a prince bishop toward the end of his life.) Butler was aware of evolution especially with regard to delay (AR.1.5.18) and waste in nature (AR.2.4.6); he preached on the powers of the unconscious engines of self-deception; he lectured the rich on what they owe to the poor; and he acknowledged the possible intellectual and spiritual legitimacy of atheism, so what has now been added to the discussion is not the basic evidence and argumentation but rather a public, cultural context, that is informed by Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Spencer, and Rand.

L. T. Townsend's (1914) list of philosophers who had a measurable theory of evolution includes Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Butler. Townsend claims that these evolutionary philosophers meet the conditions of (1) a first and constant superintending cause, (2) interventionist interruptions, and (3) occasional production of new creatures to fill existing gaps, all of which neatly divide into observations of nature which they share and the explanatory cause of the observables on which they of course differ from the moderns. Whether the medium is the message can be argued both ways, but what is undeniable is that the root metaphor— probation in expectation of recovery— remains and retains its force as the rule of life only if we are willing to move from the medium of Butler's time: the sermon to the novel, poetry, film, and finally to an emphasis on abstract expression as the means of calming the torment of discord while retaining individual personal identity. The root strategy of Butler's work is to win people over to the practice of a life of virtue and piety. In Butler's telling, rewards and punishments are essential in pursuit of the life of virtue and piety. One who lives the morally and religiously good life becomes happy because of the rewards that nature (which in Butler's view and nature's God established) provides to those who follow virtue (the dictates of conscience) and avoid vice. The rewards and punishments for virtue and vice in this life and continue in a future life. Many readers have taken Butler to be following Plato in making a central problem of philosophy to demonstrate the convergence of duty and of interest, so that the desire to be a good and virtuous person in no way conflicts with the need for prudence and the pursuit of happiness. Butler was aware of various objections that had been raised in his time, but since the problem of personal identity seemed to him a distraction more than probative. He therefore relegates his reply to an appendix ("dissertation") added to the *Analogy of Religion*. Today that reply is read as an essay in many philosophy classes.

To carry out this strategy Butler must show regarding all the objections to religion, all the inhibitions that prevent people from living the life of virtue and religion, that the objections can be answered, at least to a probability enough to render virtue and religion actionable.
In Pascal's paradigm, we will accept a low probability of success if the payoff is large enough. Butler's root metaphor is that of acting to save oneself in a dangerous situation. Perhaps the chance of escape is small, but if that chance, however small, is better than any alternative action, then we should pursue it just as vigorously as we would if it were a sure thing. William James emphasizes that having made a wager (investment) one may sometimes be able to act in a manner that increases the odds of success.

Butler's system of virtue and piety is derived from Aristotle, Thomas, the Stoics, and, of course, the Bible. Butler's works are not the personal musings of an obscure cleric; they are an adroit articulation of the evidence and argumentation in favor of a version of classic Anglican

Christianity, expressed in terms of the root narrative of the redemption of humanity. What distinguishes Butler from many other advocates, Christian or non-Christian, is the candor with which he states and replies to so many objections to living the life of virtue and piety.

From ancient times many people have been bothered by the fact that in this world virtue and justice do not seem perfectly coordinated, the Book of Job being one of the ancient landmarks. Good people do not always do well in the world, but the wicked may prosper. The prevalence of unexplained and apparently unjustified suffering in the world disturbed many who were otherwise religiously inclined. Butler is not proposing a new or modified theodicy in the manner of Leibniz with his claim that we can see this as the best of all possible worlds. Rather he urges his readers to see the world as a vast field of which we are mostly ignorant as to intent, that has been laid out, apparently for a test, trial, or probation of our character—moral and intellectual. Some who experience a problem become angry and resentful and complain. Others remain calm, see the difficulty as a test of skill and of character, and get to work addressing the issue, whether intellectual or moral.[24]

Whereas Leibniz tried to present enough evidence to prove God not guilty of creating a less than perfect world, Butler attempted no such theodicy. Butler tried to show that the skeptics had not presented enough evidence to convict God of creating a less than perfect world, and Butler fleshed out his plea by showing that although we do know some things about the world that are hard to explain on the God hypothesis, there is a far greater field of ignorance, so much we do not know, that we cannot in good reason draw any inference regarding the origin and nature of the world.

Butler argued that the most ethical life is also the most self-beneficial life. “Honesty is the best policy” is not just a slogan. “Virtue is its own reward” is an important truth about our world.

Virtue.

In seeking the guide to life Butler does not take long before he adopts the old Stoic discovery that following nature is the rule of life. We are to take this as our guide.

For us, conscience is supreme in moral nature and is the supreme guide telling us both that we ought to follow nature and how we are to go about doing so. God brought the world into being, ordered human nature according to his own image, and now governs the course of nature through the rules He established, especially with regard to human freedom of action, and the consequences we are to expect from our acts. The world, for Butler, is obviously a teleological system. Life’s aim is not so much to increase human knowledge or pleasure, but to become virtuous and pious by serving time in this probationary world with its rewards and punishments in this life and with the anticipation in the completion of the system in a future life. The whole of

[24] The concept of a best of all possible worlds appears to have originated with Leibniz but is better known today in association with Voltaire’s *Candide,* where it is ridiculed.

nature can be a help in serving out our probation, but, again, according to Butler, we also have access to a republication of the law of nature in the words of scripture.

Virtue is an end but is also conducive to happiness if not in this world at least in the next, and in no way contrary to private interest. The alleged coincidence of duty and interest is the great question, the ancient question, we must still face, and we must face it not as an intellectual obligation but as a practical imperative needed to maintain public order.

Evil has forever been called as a witness for the opposition. Observation and experience seem decisive, so Butler appeals to ignorance not as a solution or theodicy but as a way of undermining the inference from the existence of evil in the world to the non-existence of an all good God. If we stick to our empirical principle that what we believe should be determined by direct observation or at least testimony as opposed to imagination and prejudice, then we must admit that we see in the world many more cases of evil having its way as well as of virtue seeming to have the upper hand.

Butler's development of the human ignorance theme is the topic receiving the most extensive treatment in the *Sermons* and the *Analogy*. The organization of the sermons is a detailed presentation of the case for and against human nature being created by God, and not only created as a shop project but created in God's image.[25]

Regardless of what we believe regarding how humans became humans, the point is that we are human, distinct from brutes and from the higher spiritual beings.[26] Butler, Christians, and many other theists all see human nature as divine workmanship and as such sacred. (FS 8.17)

Self-deception makes our sacred nature unreliable, but we can be on guard against being deceived, and there are precautions we can take to minimize the effects of self-deception. Hypocrisy, another commonplace characteristic of humans, has the potential of undermining the tendency toward virtue. A person's moral character is determined by how he or she acts, but the hypocrite acts in a way contrary to what is claimed verbally. The hypocrisy (humbug) of a leader or high official can undermine the moral framework of an organization by breeding cynicism.

Butler's insistence that we are sacred, the work of the divine would not amount to much without has careful attention to the passions and pleasures and how they are balanced and harmonized by the other elements of human nature: cool[27] self-love and conscience. Butler sees

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[25] An earlier articulation of this view of the problem of evil in relation to the work of Bishop Butler appears in David White, " The Problem of Evil," *Second Order* vol. IV, no. 1 (January) 1995.

[26] Modern research suggests other animals seem to act on concepts such as fairness and justice. (Brosnan, de Waal, 2003; McAuliffe, 2018; Tomasello 2013)

[27] "Cool" as an adjective was established in Butler's time as meaning "not affected by passion or emotion, … calm, composed. (OED). The "cool hour" can also refer to the time of sober deliberation as opposed to the time of action. "… a judge, not being compelled to act, can attain Butler's "cool hour" for the sake of evaluation. Judicial judgment will be that of a passive observer, and this can be useful. For if one can find a framework that can be respected by both sides, then one's role is important indeed (Elizabeth Wolgast in Brady and Garver 1991). In

the divine origin as apparent in nature (AR part 1), in human nature (FS) and institutions (SS and DC), and in revelation (AR part 2).

The distinctive nature of Butler's treatment of the problem of evil is apparent in one paragraph on the topic. We have subdivided the single paragraph passage to encourage close reading:

> [9a] However, it is surely reasonable, and what might have been expected,
> [9b] that creatures in some stage of their being, suppose in the infancy of it,
> [9c] should be placed in a state of discipline and improvement,
> [9d] where their patience and submission is to be tried
> [9e] by afflictions, where temptations are to be resisted, and difficulties gone through in the discharge of their duty.
> [9f] Now, if the greatest pleasures and pains of the present life may be overcome and suspended, as they manifestly may, by hope and fear, and other passions and affections; then the evidence of religion, and the sense of the consequences of virtue and vice, might have been such, as entirely in all cases to prevail over those afflictions, difficulties, and temptations; prevail over them so, as to render them absolutely none at all.
> [9g] But the very notion itself now mentioned, of a state of discipline and improvement, necessarily excludes such sensible evidence and conviction of religion, and of the consequences of virtue and vice.
> [9h] Religion consists in submission and resignation to the divine will.
> [9i] Our condition in this world is a school of exercise for this temper: and our ignorance, the shallowness of our reason, the temptations, difficulties, afflictions, which we are exposed to; all equally contribute to make it so.
> [9j] The general observation may be carried on; and whoever will attend to the thing will plainly see, that less sensible evidence, with less difficulty in practice, is the same, as more sensible evidence, with greater difficulty in practice.
> [9k] Therefore difficulties in speculation as much come into the notion of a state of discipline, as difficulties in practice: and so the same reason or account is to be given of both.
> [9l] Thus, though it is indeed absurd to talk of the greater merit of assent, upon little or no evidence, than upon demonstration.
> [9m] yet the strict discharge of our duty, with less sensible evidence does imply in it a better character, than the same diligence in the discharge of it upon more sensible evidence.

Appendix IV we present a sketch of such a framework as extrapolated from the works of Butler onto the civil discourse of today.

> [9n] This fully accounts for and explains that assertion of our saviour, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;* have become Christians and obeyed the gospel, upon less sensible evidence,
> [9o] than that which *Thomas,* to whom he is speaking, insisted upon. (FS.15.9)

Critics have complained that Butler's account of human nature is written more for the glory of humanity than for the glory of God. This objection seems to overlook the point that anything created, including humanity, can be attributed back to the creator, God.

The rule of life which Butler sought as a business of his life turns out to be an elaborate picture (perhaps a picture holding us captive) of a world in which we have a hive of passions, but also the ability to govern those passions, and the free will to act as we will undetermined by any necessity. In our nature the ultimate rule is by conscience, which, in Butler turns out to be the image of God within us.

Many questions remain. Self-deception and hypocrisy come naturally to us and throw us off the moral course. We are attracted to pleasure within the bounds of virtue but also beyond the bounds of virtue. Love of self and love of neighbor do not appear as well coordinated as Butler seems to think, and there is only a loose fit between living virtuously and being rewarded. Likewise the prudent do not always prosper.

Butler claims the scriptures are a republication of the revelation provided in the natural world, but critics see the scripture as raising as many problems as it attempts to solve. In the 300 years since Butler first published the state of the evidence and form of the argument have changed greatly. Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche are only the best known and most influential of the large number who have contributed to the discussion. In Butler's time there were no novels in the modern sense, yet critics have long recognized Butler's influence on the rise of the novel.[28]

Our work ought not to be judged by what it does not do and never was intended to do, but those who register such a complaint may still contribute to the discussion that does interest us. At the very least, such critics may be in some way related to a single system in which it is the same virtue and piety that is embraced, rejected, or honed to perfection**.** The diehard atheist will dismiss with a shrug, patronize, or ridicule that so much is made of nothing. The true believer will claim we have trivialized the faith by reducing it to evidence and probabilities. Such will always be the case. Our defense is that it is not we but the facts that embarrasses the atheist and the uncritical true believer. So, it has been and so shall be.

Butler proposes a positive analogy between the effect in architecture and the effect of his (verbal) argument taken as a whole, but on the other hand Butler complains about the trouble words make and the poor critical reading skills of the population of his day. Some of Butler's work poses difficulty for the modern reader. Not only is it dense, but it uses archaic English.

In the preface added three years after the original publication of his Rolls sermons, Butler

[28] Baker, Ernest A. *The History of the English Novel*, Vol. 5: The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance (Severus, 2014).

provides a classic statement of his intended audience. Butler was concerned to provide readers with what they needed more than what they wanted. Our intention is essentially the same as Butler's, adjusted for the passage of 300 years. As Butler stated it:

> Not to mention the multitudes who read merely for the sake of talking, or to qualify themselves for the world, or some such kind of reasons; there are, even of the few who read for their own entertainment, and have a real curiosity to see what is said, several, which is prodigious, who have no sort of curiosity to see what is true: I say, curiosity; because it is too obvious to be mentioned, how much that religious and sacred attention, which is due to truth, and to the important question, What is the rule of life? is lost out of the world. [11/12] For the sake of this whole class of readers, for they are of different capacities, different kinds, and get into this way from different occasions, I have often wished that it had been the custom to lay before people nothing in matters of argument but premises, and leave them to draw conclusions themselves; which, though it could not be done in all cases, might in many.
>
> The great number of books and papers of amusement, which, of one kind or another, daily come in one's way, have in part occasioned, and most perfectly fall in with and humor, this idle way of reading and considering things. By this means, time, even in solitude, is happily got rid of, without the pain of attention: neither is any part of it more put to the account of idleness, one can scarce forbear saying, is spent with less thought, than great part of that which is spent in reading.
>
> *Fifteen Sermons*, "Preface" (1729)

The above should not be interpreted that Butler is against reading for pleasure or against other innocent pleasures and recreational activities. We take pleasure in works of fiction because, at least in the case of moral fiction, we can wallow in the larger questions of life.
What Butler is against is avoiding these larger questions of life. Today we are confronted my many innocent and not so innocent recreational activities. Fun is given the priority in life—so the temptation to avoid the important questions of life and to just enjoy ourselves is ever present. Butler encouraged people to consider carefully the meaning of life as they understood it (after having heard many ethical sermons by the preachers of his time), and to indulge and amuse themselves only to the extent such diversions underwrite and help to sustain the main business of life.

Butler accepted the claim, usually associated with hedonists, that pleasures assembled into a life of happiness was a fair definition of our goal in human life. Finding happiness is not as easy as some people think. In the quest for happiness through indulgence and excessive satisfaction of favored passions these people end up making themselves less happy, even miserable. Butler believed the path to the happy life ran through adoption of the practical life of

virtue and piety. Since the world is so filled with distractions (paying more attention to what is less important), inhibitions (fears of failure or shame), and barriers (obstacles that cannot be removed and have to be worked around), it is best to look upon our life on earth as a time of trial, test, and probation. Apologists and philosophers of religion often write as if what prevents people from giving up their inherited faith or from being converted to a mature faith is the lack of a compelling philosophical defense of the faith. Yet, this characterization seems to get the dynamic wrong. Augustine, Anselm, and just about all the great practitioners of Christian thought have been clear that the living of the Christian life precedes its intellectual understanding, and William James, to mention only the best known example, concludes his Gifford Lectures with a total trashing of the whole practice of scholastic natural theology. Our aim is not to prove anything in the sense of selling, promoting, or propagandizing, but to set out—or at least point toward—the whole body of evidence available to all, and then appeal to self-interest in urging those who have the interest to arrange that evidence in the form of a cumulative case in terms of the person's own life and whether the events and experiences of that life may fall into a providential pattern when considered as a whole with many aspects unknown, unfinished, or misunderstood.

To study Bishop Joseph Butler is to study his method in philosophy of ethics and religion in the context of his life, and his life in the larger context, on up to the history of the world, at least in those areas in which Bishop Butler played a role. Thus, we are interested in what Butler said of the creation of the world, the emergence of humanity, the rise of the Jews, and from among the Jews the anointing of Jesus. Butler takes an interest in the spread of Christianity beginning with small communities and then growing into whole nations, but he did not anticipate the collapse of confidence in Christendom or the reconstitution of the British Empire as a Commonwealth.

Christianity came to Britain early in the narrative of the spread of Christianity. Eventually the church in England became the Church of England. Now, 300 years after Butler's first publication, there is a long and elaborate story to be told regarding Butler's life and his personal contribution to the world-wide spread of Christianity. Each of these stages in the progress of religion has been studied empirically by adherents of the Christian religion, sceptics of that or any religion, and the huge number of interested parties who have not yet developed a fully articulated position. The turn to the Hebrews and then to the English is the path of Anglicanism; other religions and secularisms have, obviously, taken other paths.

As researchers we presume, until convinced to the contrary, that there is one truth "out there" with many paths to finding it. By adopting this presumption, we expect to increase the degree of confirmation. For example, regarding everyday empirical judgments, what seems true to a single observer according to sight, will only seem more likely to be true once hearing and smell are brought in. If we then add the vantage points of other observers and appealing to more than once sense, the likelihood of our initial conclusion being true obviously becomes all the greater. **Attempts to quantify the degree of confirmation are of little significance for Butler since his concern is whether the conclusion is actionable**.

We need to be candid about the potential for bias, preconception, and even self-deception in the form of wishful thinking. If an adherent of some other religion, or an atheist or agnostic looks over our material and comes to the same final conclusion ("that the best and happiest human life is available only to those who live in accord with virtue and piety") albeit by consulting different experiences and following a different but equally cogent line of reasoning, then whatever prejudice we may have entertained seems inconsequential, especially if we all not only reach the same conclusion but also determine that conclusion to be actionable, and not only determine it to be actionable but go on to carry out the actions, and continue such activity throughout our lives.

We do not aim to add to the empirical philosophy of religion except incidentally as regards some fine points of Butler's life. Our main point is that those, like Butler, who are seeking the truth and unafraid of facing whatever truth or ignorance ends up being apparent will benefit, and certainly the larger society will benefit, by thinking in terms of collecting actionable evidence and arranging that evidence in the form of an actionable cumulative case. Admittedly, the study of philosophy and religion is an empirical study. This study may be and has been undertaken as academic and scientific, as introspective, and participatory, or as a matter of informal observation guided by firsthand experience without the discipline of the methods of social sciences. Those who undertake to search for truth and to consider the whole evidence may expect an actionable position to emerge in the form of the crystallization of a cumulative case.

Butler was primarily concerned with the practice of the good life, "knowing how," and less with gaining descriptive knowledge, "knowing that" (Ryle, 1945). As he said in one of his public sermons: "The visible constitution and course of nature, the moral law written in our hearts, the positive institutions of religion, and even any memorial of it, are all spoken of in scripture under this, or the like denomination: so are the prophets, apostles, and our Lord himself. They are all *witnesses,* for the most part unregarded witnesses, on behalf of God, to mankind." (SS.1.6)[29]

The picture that holds Butler captive, so to speak, may be described in a few words. The Creator is a benevolent being who governs the world with justice. In pursuit of this justice our human nature is adapted to the nature of the world so that the world serves as a training ground and appears to be well suited for the development of character (or virtue) in humans. Character comes only by facing difficulty, and as we are ignorant of God's ultimate aims and means, so we are assisted by a whole line of prophets, a verbal revelation now published as scripture, and the entire manifest of sounds, images, and bodily movements that constitute the canon of our culture.

Apologetics is the intellectual enterprise of replying to those who have raised objections to this picture. For much of the 20th century the most popular objection in some quarters was that the story is meaningless because it is not sufficiently grounded in fact. A grave concern in the middle ages was that the picture contradicts itself by trying to insert the infinite being into a

[29] There is a moment in the play *A Man for All Seasons* when Sir Thomas More is encouraging his son-in-law to become a teacher. The young man protested, "Who would notice me except God and my students?" And More responded, "Not a bad audience, that." (Lloyd 2008)

finite world. Since ancient times and on down to the present it has seemed to many that the pain and suffering in the world, the many forms of apparently unredeemed evil, are enough to disprove the claim that we live under the rule of a benevolent and omnipotent deity.

Natural Law

Butler follows the Thomistic view of natural law:

> "It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason. St. Paul recognizes the existence of a natural law when he describes the moral responsibility of those ancients who did not have the benefit of Mosaic revelation. "Pagans," he says, "who never heard of the Law but are led by reason to do what the Law commands, may not actually 'possess' the Law, but they can be said to 'be' the Law. They can point to the substance of the Law engraved on their hearts--they can call a witness, that is, their own conscience--they have accusation and defense, that is, their own inner mental dialogue" (Romans 2:14-15).[30]

Natural law as a philosophical theory maintains that in addition to whatever laws may be enacted and promulgated by legislators or judges, there is a universal law in nature, not tied to any particular human society but to human nature as such, and binding on all beings who possess that human nature. Butler clearly stands in the natural law tradition, and he expounds natural law ideas throughout his works. Darwin uses Butler's definition of "natural" (AR 1.1.23) as an epigraph in all but the first editions of his *Origin of Species.*

In the 19th century and especially under the influence of Butler's defense of probability as the guide to life the opponents stressed that while the Christian picture might be true, it was likely false. We all act on lesser probabilities when there is no viable alternative. Even a slim chance is better than no chance. Philosophers like Bishop Butler and Bertrand Russell have seen clearly that the issue is not the magnitude of the probability so much as whether the probability however low is enough to be actionable. Bishop Butler and Bertrand Russell at opposite ends of philosophical theology in Britain, argued, respectively, that the probability of God and religion was, or was not, enough to be actionable.

Bishop Butler begins by making the search for truth unashamed to learn from anyone the business of his life.[31] But what is truth? What is power? Why do we so fear shame? The truth he

[30] https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/dictionary/index.cfm?id=35060. See also D. J. O'Connor (1967) *Aquinas and Natural Law.* St. Martin's Press.

[31] "… as I design the search after truth as the business of my life, I shall not be ashamed to learn from any person…" Butler in his fourth letter to Clarke Dec 16, 1713.

seeks is the rule of life, and the main statement of the rule is that virtue consists in following nature, i.e., our human nature. Butler then attempts to demonstrate that our human nature can be analyzed. That it consists of various affections, superior principles such as self-love, benevolence, and the love of God (obviously corresponding to "the Great Commandment,"), and conscience, which may also be called the rule of life since it is by the order of nature the supreme principle. That is, that one desires something is a good reason for trying to obtain that thing, but it is not a conclusive reason. It is essential to consider superior principles such as self-love. Butler understood conscience to be supreme, at the top of the chain of command, but he also recognized the importance of coming to see that self-love and conscience cannot be in ultimate conflict in the theistic or even in the naturalistic world we are imagining.

Bertrand Russell does not discuss Butler at length, but he says enough on the topics to make clear how much he is at odds with Butler. In an article titled "Is There a God?" commissioned, but never published, by *Illustrated* magazine in 1952, Russell wrote:

> Many orthodox people speak as though it were the business of sceptics to disprove received dogmas rather than of dogmatists to prove them. This is, of course, a mistake. If I were to suggest that between the Earth and Mars there is a china teapot revolving about the sun in an elliptical orbit, nobody would be able to disprove my assertion provided I were careful to add that the teapot is too small to be revealed even by our most powerful telescopes. But if I were to go on to say that, since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is intolerable presumption on the part of human reason to doubt it, I should rightly be thought to be talking nonsense. If, however, the existence of such a teapot were affirmed in ancient books, taught as the sacred truth every Sunday, and instilled into the minds of children at school, hesitation to believe in its existence would become a mark of eccentricity and entitle the doubter to the attentions of the psychiatrist in an enlightened age or of the Inquisitor in an earlier time. [32]

The rule, or at least guide, to life, also turns out to be probability. The guide is probable because we, unlike God, are not omniscient. We can know very little with certainty. The best we can do is deal with probabilities. Russell accepted probability as the guide to life and attributed it to Butler in his review (1922) of Keynes' *Treatise* (1921).

There is no denying that Russell's teapot has done much to inform the philosophically literate public regarding the importance of appeals to the burden of proof both in general and specifically regarding philosophy of religion. The burden of proof matters because so many of the great problems of philosophy have not been resolved by the evidence and argumentation provided in centuries of disputation, so if there is any practical relevance or implication to the

[32] From Bertrand Russell, "Is There a God?" (1952) first published in Slater, John G. (ed.). *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, Vol. 11: Last Philosophical Testament, 1943–68*. Routledge (1997), pp. 542–548.

question at hand, if there are actions that are grounded in the argument, they can only be resolved by appeal to the burden of proof.

Thus, arise some skeptical doubts about the efficacy of Russell's teapot, not for serving tea or providing entertainment to the public, but for resolving the question of whether there is a God, so far as the resolution of that question matters in the daily affairs of busy people.

People often turn to philosophy out of a fear of self-deception and hypocrisy. One of several links between Wittgenstein and Butler is their detestation of humbug and their determination to avoid such speech. Butler devotes one of his published sermons to the government of the tongue. The duty of one who has something to say is to testify. This duty to testify remains even if no one is listening, or if listening not comprehending, or if comprehending not translating what has been heard into action. Butler anticipated Marx's 11th thesis on Feuerbach, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it," with his repeated insistence that ethics and religion are a matter of performing certain actions, of living in a certain way, and not of affirming or denying certain opinions.

When the objections are considered fairly and philosophically, they often manifest themselves as inhibitions to act or excuses for not acting. The inhibitions, the fear of self-deception and of excuse mongering, and the insistence to seek truth unashamed by learning from all encourage the inquiry to be carried out as a dialog or seminar with many participants, but without any one person dominating the group.

Along with Samuel Clarke, Locke, and Newton, Robert Boyle (1627-1691) was one of the founders of modern natural theology. The only conflict these people understood between science and religion was that the study of revelation had to compete for time with the experimental study of the natural world. Boyle was long active in the promulgation of Christianity. Butler's first publication was his correspondence to Clarke in reply to Clarke's Boyle Lectures.[33] We want to go beyond Boyle and open the field to all the atheistic and non-Christian persuasions and continue to favor relational deliberations among the Christian denominations.

The well-trained apologist need not be concerned with the vast number of attacks on religion and ethics that show deficiencies in critical thinking skills. In various passages Butler provides direction regarding who is and who is not worth arguing with. For example, if our project is to get at the truth of a matter then we must use the language associated with truth-seeking, which obviously varies over time and from culture to culture, but there is no point in addressing those who lack critical listening and reading skills to begin with. An attempt may be made to educate them in those skills but setting out an argument in any medium is useless if the

[33] In his will, Robert Boyle instituted a series of lectures intended to "prove the Christian Religion, against notorious infidels, viz. Atheists, Theists [i.e., Deists], Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans…".

audience is unable to follow such path to the truth. Thus, in addition to selecting good readers or good auditors, the apologist needs to concentrate on people of good will and common sense.

Natural Religion and the Appeal to Evidence and Argumentation

> "In contemporary philosophy, however, both "natural religion" and "natural theology" typically refer to the project of using the cognitive faculties that are "natural" to human beings—reason, sense-perception, introspection—to investigate religious or theological matters. Natural religion or theology, on the present understanding, is not limited to empirical inquiry into nature, and it is not wedded to a pantheistic result. It does, however, avoid appeals to special non-natural faculties (ESP, telepathy, mystical experience) or supernatural sources of information (sacred texts, revealed theology, creedal authorities, direct supernatural communication). In general, natural religion or theology (hereafter "natural theology") aims to adhere to the same standards of rational investigation as other philosophical and scientific enterprises and is subject to the same methods of evaluation and critique." (Chignell & Pereboom, 2017))

Setting aside the more obvious, amateurish, and frequently heard complaints the serious objections may be grouped as follows:

1. That some of what Butler claims and that seems to impress his admirers is meaningless.
2. Our emphasis on reading Butler whole is misguided since Butler contradicts himself. Butler seems to want to have it both ways regarding being or not being an egoist or a utilitarian.
3. Certain of Butler's ideas, which may seem useful at first turn out to be false. If what Butler says is meaningful and consistent with the rest of his claims it may still be considered false if it conflicts with what is generally believed. The paradigm of this complaint is the problem of evil. If the world was created and is ruled by a benevolent and all-powerful deity, as Butler believed, there should be no unnecessary suffering in the world. Yet, a great many people believe in the existence of unnecessary suffering and it is generally acknowledged that there is a great deal of apparently unnecessary suffering.
4. Finally, it is possible that some claims in Butler and in this book are meaningful, self-consistent, and not yet disproved, but still suffer from there being insufficient evidence for them to be actionable. To be actionable in the sense required here is to be acted on in the first place, to be sufficiently rewarding as to continue to be acted on, and to continue to be acted on in the face of serious and sustained criticism.

The conversion Butler urged was to a self-conscious awareness that we are in a state of morality and a state of religion, sometimes described as the claim that morals and religion are efficacious, and that the only life we should desire is the life of piety and virtue. For Butler to be

in a state of religion was to be in a state of probation, that is, a state in which virtue is rewarded and vice punished by whatever means. (AR.2.6.18)

This claim is tautological in the Platonic tradition. The love of God drives us to live the life of virtue and piety. Virtue is understood here in terms of love of self and love of neighbor, piety as respect for the deity and for the creation, nature. Even under this summary of the law, those who deny the existence of an appropriate object are exempt from the requirement to love. Butler also acknowledged that those who think these matters through are unlikely to violate perceived self-interest for the sake of virtue or piety if they cannot be seen to converge.[34]

The ancient Platonic project of showing that they do converge is therefore critical to the present project. What we need to ask regarding living the life of virtue and piety are questions like:

- What is our interest? "Interest" here is "advantage" or "welfare" or "conducive to flourishing." For example, the police may advise me that it is in my interest to confess the crime of which I am accused. There is no question I committed the crime, but I am so ashamed of myself that I find it impossible to admit to anyone. I am therefore inhibited from making the confession. There is another type of case. I know full well of my guilt and feel capable of making the confession, but I doubt that I will benefit from making the confession at this time. So, by analogy, we see that people fail to live the life of virtue and piety perhaps because they lack the strength of character to do so, but also because they are determined to watch out for themselves and do not believe that living the life of virtue and piety is looking out for oneself. Another classic case is one in which we can steal a large sum of money with almost no chance of getting caught. The tradition to which Butler belongs insists that an act contrary to good conscience can never be in one's self interest.
- Must there be a future life? Butler provides a long and detailed argument in his attempt to show that virtue, piety and self-interest all urge one to lead the same life, but he admits that while he has demonstrated a tendency in nature for virtue to lead to happiness, that it is a tendency and not a certainty. To complete the argument, we must hypothesize a life after death in which the tendencies to reward virtue and piety apparent in this world are continued and completed in a future life.
- Must there be a God? One of the great divisions in philosophy of religion is between those who believe God must exist for there to be a moral economy such as Butler posits and those who believe there could be such a moral economy in an atheistic universe. Butler addresses himself primarily to classic theists or deists, both of whom acknowledge God's existence and do not require further proof. We, however, are writing for both those who deny the existence of a deity and those who insist a deity is required for the moral economy which is at the center of our attention. Stipulation (granting or concession) may be genuine or "for the sake of argument," so we cannot

[34] The "cool hour" passage.

fault the audience Butler wrote for, but we must still be prepared to answer any and all objections to our position.

- Need there be justice in nature? By "nature" Butler usually meant the course and constitution of the natural world or the nature of human beings, as must be distinguished from natural facts or states of affairs in the world. By analogy, we may observe that the laws of a city are sound and just but admit that the citizens do not always obey these just laws nor do the police always enforce them. Butler's most general claim is that the world including our human nature can be attributed to God. Any demonstrated defect in the world or in human nature therefore has the potential to defeat Butler's claims. Arguing in rebuttal Butler must show the alleged defect is only apparent or that it cannot be attributed to God. Examples proposed as objections are shown not to be entirely harmful but to serve some greater good, or they are blamed on wickedness in the souls of humans, animals, or demons of some sort.
- Must there be public evidence for whatever our answer? People often claim a "right" to believe and practice whatever religion appeals to them. Less often they extend this liberty to ethics. Butler's point of view is that we are on trial in this world, part of the trial is intellectual, part moral, and that at least for the intellectual trial our acts must be in strict accord with the evidence available when the choice is forced
- Must there be credible testimony of witnesses? Philosophy is not a private exercise of thinking to oneself. We should be suspicious of any conclusion that is not widely shared once it is stated clearly and supported by a full body of evidence and argumentation.
- Must our arguments be conclusive or will probable do? And if so, what level of probability is needed to be actionable? One of the more unusual features of Butler's work, and one often missed by readers although plainly stated in the text, is that probabilities far less than an even chance may still be actionable by common consent. Told by the doctor that I have a fatal condition and can only be saved, if at all, by taking a particular drug that works 25% of the time (well below an even chance) wouldn't I be a fool not to play the long shot considering that the only alternative is certain death? In the American legal system, the accused must be released and cannot be tried again for the same crime if there is even the least reasonable doubt of guilt. Double jeopardy applies only to criminal cases, so a defendant who was acquitted or convicted of a crime may be sued in a civil lawsuit based on the same conduct.[35]

The root question here, for Butler and for us, is whether the total evidence of the world read as a cumulative case can be understood as a proving ground or crucible for conversion to the life of virtue and piety? To say that the world observed leads us to a life of virtue and piety is

[35] https://www.justia.com/criminal/procedure/double-jeopardy/

to say the course and constitution of the world appears to us providential and should be responded to as such.

Appearances to the contrary, it remains to make an especially close and informed reading of the skies and to calculate the degree of probability considered actionable. We must avoid speculation not grounded in experience, but also stay clear of feeling committed to our experiences, whatever they are, in a way that begs the question.[36] "…nobody should write poetry to exhibit intellect or attainment. Who cares for that sort of poetry? Who cares for learning—who cares for fine words in poetry? And who does not care for feeling—real feeling—however simply, even rudely expressed?" (Bronte, 1849, Ch. xii)

The question of finding the guide to life is not that of explaining why the world exists or why it is the way it is. Butler maintains we are in a general ignorance regarding how to explain the course and constitution of nature. What we can do, however, is consider whether this course and constitution of nature corresponds enough to the notion of its being a proving ground, a place of trial, test, and probation to be actionable. The notion of trial here is that of trial and error; the notion of test that of quality control. The process does produce judgements and evaluations, rewards, and punishments, but the aim is more to develop and improve than to get retribution. Implicit in this way of thinking is a willingness to consider that not only does the world as a time of trial contribute to the improvement of virtue but also such a world is the only way the sought-after moral state can be attained. Now when we look at our natural and social environment, we recognize we are moral agents and that there is a great deal that is unsatisfactory in the respect we show for ourselves, for others, for nature, and for nature's God. We cannot know if someone is truly good unless they have been tested by having to act in conditions of ignorance, as acknowledged by Butler in the following:

> There is no manner of absurdity in supposing a veil on purpose drawn over some scenes of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the sight of which might some way or other strike us too strongly; or that better ends are served by their being concealed, than could be by their being exposed to our knowledge. The Almighty may have cast clouds and darkness round about him, for reasons and purposes of which we have not the least glimpse or conception [S XV. 6]

In reflecting on this passage in Butler, we have found Worthen's commentary helpful:

> It is this idea that is crucial for Butler's treatment of human ignorance, both here and again in The *Analogy of Religion*. It allows Butler to speak about the purpose

[36] The long association between science and natural religion as opposed to revelation is presented in rich historical detail in Janković, Vladimir. *Reading the Skies: a Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1820*. Manchester UP, 2000.

> of our ignorance, indeed about ignorance as an intended and purposeful feature of our present condition, rather than as an unfortunate fate or simple inconvenience. Ignorance assumes teleological significance. Butler ends the first section of Sermon XV by sketching out the line of thought that plays such a key role in his later work: that we are in "a state of discipline and improvement" where it is not appropriate that we should be presented with obvious evidence and proof in matters of religion and morals (S XV.7). Butler formulated the point succinctly: "difficulties in speculation as much come into the notion of a state of discipline, as difficulties in practice" (S XV.8). This being so, however, it is clear that as our lack of knowledge is part of divine teleology, so knowledge cannot be our end, the business assigned to us (S XV. 9). But in the light of teleological ignorance, what then is "our business and our duty"? (Worthen, 1995)

When challenged, we tend to make excuses, and even when not challenged we feel inhibited from the life of virtue and piety, the life of showing respect for nature, for the source of nature, for other people and for ourselves. It is hard to defend not showing such respect. Even if we presume that God does not exist, we must acknowledge that fictional figures often deserve and get respect from many people. However, for many reasons it is also hard to show such respect wholeheartedly. There are too many obstacles. In what follows, some of the most challenging impediments or inhibitions, the principal excuses, will be examined.

Butler defines religion as submission to God and considers religion to be a practical matter.[37] The natural religion refers to what we can know about this way of life just by paying attention to the constitution and course of the natural world and to our human nature. Revealed religion as found in scripture is a republication of the natural religion. The church and all the forms of institutional religion are vehicles by which the revealed religion of scripture is transmitted to us.

Again, we must fall back on the empirical albeit personal nature of our inquiry. Butler's position and the position of orthodox Christianity is that God is beyond our comprehension. That would be the end of the discussion except that the various images, concepts, and notions of the deity that are affirmed or denied when we try to express the ground or groundlessness of our being are all inadequate but are not equally inadequate. Some representations of nature or of the various God-substitutes can be observed to work better than others for the purpose of providing us with a rule of life. That one vision works better than another is no reason for considering the vision that works better to be true; we know they are all false. But that the vision works better than others is good reason for using it as a model in trying to think through our philosophical and theological concerns.

[37] 'Practical' here means 'relating to practice' and has nothing to do with crass efficiency. Butler is unequivocal on the nature of submission to God. "Whereas the whole of morality and religion consisting merely in action itself," (AR.2.6.17)

People have claimed that those who are personally religious, those who hold virtue and piety in high regard, are unable to review the relevant evidence candidly. So, it seems except for a crushing objection. The intent of any apologetic or evidential work is to clear all inhibitions to wholehearted practice. The apologist can never gain the apologetic objective by using arguments that are not convincing and are transparent.

There are, of course, many evidential apologists besides Butler, many apologetic strategies other than the evidentialist, and many forms of witness (shining one's light) other than apologetics. Those who take seriously the requirement of whole-heartedness recognize that a true test requires a willingness to wager the whole of one's life, at least one's post-conversion life.

What is required for the project of self and society is wholehearted participation, even if there is an intellectually healthy dose of doctrinal doubt. For example, after an agonizing period of indecision, I select a text for my class, say, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, to be read in full. This is a practical decision in that it is listed on the syllabus as a set text and is sold at the bookstore as such. I may continue to entertain serious doubts regarding whether this book will serve the goals of the course, but having made the commitment I, as instructor, must follow through whole-heartedly.

As the principles of critical examination that Butler uses are based on his analysis of human nature and everyday life, the content of the evidence, (the course of nature, the text of scripture,) so our commentary draws the principles of the witnesses of our time (Bonhoeffer, Teilhard de Chardin, Merton, Kazantzakis, and Jung).

Butler was not concerned with addressing atheists. As mentioned previously, it is not, as is often claimed, that he took God's existence for granted and therefore saw no need to prove that God exists. In fact, Butler was so impressed with the success of proofs of God presented to the public recently (in his time) and the lack of credible refutation that he declared he would take for granted not that we should accept God's existence without proof but that we should take God's existence as having been proved. Perhaps the main reason Butler did not see the need for a detailed proof of God was that his mentor, Samuel Clarke had done so years before and Butler, in his correspondence with Clarke, had pronounced himself satisfied with Clarke's argument. For Butler, the greater threat to orthodoxy was from the deists, those who acknowledged God's existence but denied the credibility of the scripture-revelation.

To present Butler's ideas to today's readers, including a large population of atheists, Butler's brief remarks on several proofs of God must be associated with the present state of the argument. Butler was an evidentialist apologist. Presumed here, according to Butler, is that we share a common language and that many people are willing to discuss religion in a civil and rational manner. The logical positivists had targeted theological claims as meaningless, but Butler is not concerned with meaning in some abstract sense but only regarding implications for living the life of virtue and piety. The logical positivists grouped religious claims with every manner of metaphysical speculation. Their objections can never be a problem for Butler since he rejected every manner of speculation on his own grounds.

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live."
[Joan Didion, *White Album*]

The root narrative of the Christian religion may be stated as in the next paragraph, but, of course, God and the devil are in the details.

The creator creates, gives life, and issues a call to live in love. This aim seems to fail; humans do not respect the image of the creator. They abuse themselves, each other, and the whole of creation. The humans love, which were to mirror the divine love, are rejected in favor of a life less useful, less pleasurable, and far less fulfilling. In our story, the creator makes repeated attempts to restore the aim of creation. There is the covenant with Abraham and Sarah, the liberation from slavery, the whole long line of prophets, all culminating, when the time was right, with the incarnation of the Word in order to provide a rebirth, a conversion to lives of virtue and piety as originally intended. You must change (restore, reconstruct) your life. If conversion back to the original intent inherent in human nature never does come, then nothing else matters, and if a person does undergo the second birth, then nothing else matters.[38]

Butler's main concern is to present and overcome the "sticking points" in trying to live a life of piety and virtue, a life in accord with the (purported) original intent. He works along two axes: one running from God, the creator, out to the creation, and one from our individual selves to the others, all those with whom we naturally empathize. Love therefore includes love of God, love of nature, self-love, and love of neighbor.

A common error is to think that God, the governor of the world, is an arbitrary despot making childish demands for adoration, and then heartlessly punishing those who will not or cannot comply. Butler, as a preacher, pastor, and administrator, seeks not to dismiss such views. He even acknowledges there may be good reasons for holding such opinions. But he also thinks it is possible to see the world differently, and that working through the details of such an understanding of our situation is part, a rather large part, of our trial, test, probation, in taking up the life of piety and virtue.

A correct reference is not necessarily a good representation,[39] and an excellent representation may not refer to objects and events that ever existed as represented. Some myths entertain or enlighten, but to serve as sustaining, saving, or redemptive structures for a human community what the narrative needs most is not some historicity as understood by academics but performative participation by the whole community. Myths become established when they can attract and inspire a steady stream of novices and retain long-time actors and agents, all acting out versions of the myth, its elaboration, and its innovative integration into the environment. The participants in this drama will include those previously unacquainted as well as those openly

[38] Butler discusses involuntary slavery at SS 1747.5.

[39] People may be identified well enough by a unique number, but no one would maintain such numbering is a good representation of who the person is. So-called glamour photos may fail at showing how the subject really looks (that is the point) but be excellent representations of the subject's persona.

opposed and those who entertain a confused and contradictory comprehension of the origin, direction, and anticipated consummation of the narrative. The point is participation, and Butler is clear about what it means to participate in love of God, love of neighbor, self-love, and love of the natural world. The literal truth of a narrative is often important, but in other cases, such as parables, whether the events happened as described is not the point. The point of a parable is to illustrate some moral truth.

- Virtue and happiness seem not to converge but to diverge and oppose each other.
- There appears to be a prevalence of unnecessary evil, pain, and suffering in the world.
- Self-deception tends to defeat self-love, often goes undetected, and is difficult to overcome.
- Liberty can become hypocrisy in disguise unless contained by the group conscience.
- The pursuit of pleasure takes charge and overpowers the pursuit of happiness.
- Narrow, constricted, unenlightened self-interest rules, consciously or unconsciously, making true community impossible.
- Conscience is often misguided, unreliable, or absent altogether, a poor choice as arbiter.
- Passions such as anger, resentment, and logorrhea prove ungovernable and uncurable.
- The alleged revelation is filled with errors of fact and best understood as folklore.
- Actions have consequences, but nature does not on its own reward virtue and punish vice.
- True religion is often replaced with systems of enthusiasm and superstition.
- Institutions defended as serving the will of the deity are corrupted and frustrate that will.
- Instead of benefiting the poor by setting a good example the rich exploit and abuse them.
- Those who defend Christianity seem to disparage or at least neglect other religions.
- There is no longer a need for virtue or piety since big business and big government rule.

Butler understood being religious (pious) as seeing the world as created by God and as ruled by a Governor who communicates his will through all aspects of the creation. Thus, being religious becomes submission to the will of God, which is equivalent to following nature, with nature understood as the primal act of God.

The Christian narrative

Butler believed, and it seems hard to disagree, that those who are faced with a serious and stressful difficulty will tend to fare better if able to place themselves within a narrative. It is well known that even fictional narratives can play this therapeutic role. The following brief form of the Christian narrative ("Eucharistic Prayer 1" in *Enriching Our Worship* [Episcopalian] New York: Church Publishing, 1998.) picks up on several images that figure in Butler's telling.

> *You formed us in your own image and called us to dwell in your infinite love. You gave the world into our care that we might be your faithful stewards and show forth your bountiful grace.*

But we failed to honor your image in one another and in ourselves; we would not see your goodness in the world around us; and so we violated your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love. Yet you never ceased to care for us and prepared the way of salvation for all people.

Through Abraham and Sarah, you called us into covenant with you. You delivered us from slavery, sustained us in the wilderness, and raised up prophets to renew your promise of salvation. Then, in the fullness of time, you sent your eternal Word, made mortal flesh in Jesus. Born into the human family, and dwelling among us, he revealed your glory. Giving himself freely to death on the cross, he triumphed over evil, opening the way of freedom and life.

This recent formulation of the root narrative of Christianity is in all essentials the narrative Butler was working with. Therefore, we may, and in all honesty must, ask if there are observed features of the course and constitution of our world that contradict the narrative in a way that it becomes difficult or impossible to live in accord with the narrative, to live in virtue and in piety with respect and love for all of nature, for ourselves, for our neighbors, and for origin and regulation of the moral economy. Some physicists, for example, Stephen Hawking, seem to think that a physicalist, lawlike explanation of this moral economy is simpler, better, more convincing, than a personalist explanation. The nature of the observed moral economy would seem to provide an initial presumption in favor of a personal origin. In Butler's time, the word "moral" usually referred to anything social, personal, or human, as opposed to the physical. Whoever has the initial presumption the entire case must be worked though, thus the intent of this book is to follow up on fifteen or so of the objections the bedeviled Bishop Butler.

"Objection" is a forensic word. The psychological equivalent is "inhibition," and the ethical term is "excuse." Thus, if one who is impressed with an objection to a view of things may feel inhibited from acting in accord with that view and may be inclined to make excuses for not joining in with the adherents. The person who takes exception to some aspect of virtue or piety as the guide to life may be expected to make the objection explicit, and perhaps even militant, will be reluctant, to say the least, to adopt the way of life in question, and if called on or pressured to participate will no doubt present excuses derived from the perceived objections.

So, from page to page we lay out our version of Butler's whole argument in defense of living the life of piety and virtue. Our exposition obeys the canons of contemporary analytic philosophy, with philosophy understood as both an art and a science. In seeking the truth, we use clarity and evidence whenever clarity and evidence is called for. We recognize that poetry, music and all the arts have a role to play in the search for truth, as does speculation not supported by evidence if they are used judiciously and not carried too far. We feel obligated to collect all the evidence we can. Charity, in philosophical terms, requires we do all we can to understand statements, so they come out lucid and correct. In philosophy the principle of charity has nothing to do with giving money to panhandlers, however much Butler might have approved of the practice. Here charity is more a hermeneutic principle than a moral virtue. If a statement can be

understood with various meanings, we favor the meaning that will make the statement true. Butler's career was entirely within a single religious institution, the Church of England. We make no attempt to conceal or diminish Butler's identity as an Anglican, but we find the principles he uses in seeking truth most often carry us away from any sectarianism. Following Butler we use the methods of philosophy, performed in real life in community, to illuminate the ethical and religious path that people are already trying to follow on their own or under the guidance of one of the many commercial "gurus" available for the asking. Again, following Butler, we maintain that whatever wisdom has been granted ours to understand we are to hold in trust, the wisdom itself being more than fair compensation for our efforts.

Summary

This book pivots on the search for the truth regarding virtue, the rule of life regarding how to live. There is no easy way to defend virtue in the face of a world filled with evil, pain, and suffering. We follow Butler as far as honesty permits. Looking inward we find our human nature adapted to virtue in some ways, but on the whole humans hardly seem adapted to virtue.

We tend to self-deception and hypocrisy. The distribution of pleasure, of rewards and punishments for virtue and vice seems to not always favor the virtuous or prudent. Conscience, self-love, and the passions do not give the appearance of a well-tuned moral economy. They appear often to be in conflict.

We are offered much needed assistance by natural religion, derived from our God-given reason and a revealed religion carrying scripture delivered to the prophets. Yet the Bible is crammed with error, exaggeration, and contradiction, our human reason is limited and fallacy prone. Enthusiasm and superstition are hard to avoid, and readers may find that Butler is too hard on enthusiasts whose worship style runs to exuberance, or on the superstitious who may be taking legitimate worship aids too seriously.

Butler's insistence on an established church (with tolerance of dissent) is unacceptable to many people today (especially in the US), but philosophy never was a matter of following and having followers. The philosophical (or common) faith we seek is not found by elevating one of the traditional "great" religions or one of its variations or successors, but by elevating or transforming individuals into what Butler described as a "state of religion," that is, into a state of awareness of how we are living and what the consequences of that way of life are and will be.

Philosophers, like everyone else, have their sources and their heirs. What they receive from their predecessors is held in trust to be passed on to future generations. For those who are in the business of seeking the truth as Butler was, it is not enough to duplicate and transfer the wisdom of the past. Truth seekers have a responsibility to decrease any noise that is likely to distract or mislead future audiences. The truth is not some once and for all set-in stone deposit but rather a progressive and perfecting evolution.

Our intent in surveying Butler's whole work on philosophy and religion is set out in this preliminary chapter, our conclusions of the whole study we have undertaken is given in the

penultimate chapter (14) and prospects for what might come of such investigations is given in our final chapter.

Chapters 4 through 13 follow a single strategy. Following Butler we try to show that the main points of the life of ethics and religion are natural, that is, in accord with what we accept in the rest of life, but there are many conflicts or potential conflicts that need to be taken seriously. In short, if there is a good God who governs the world why is the providential rule not apparent everywhere and always instead of only sporadically as it appears to be? Butler's answer is that we have no answer to that question and that it is part of our trial of morality and of intellect in this world to carry on in good spirits without knowing. To make his position plausible, Butler attempts to resolve a number of difficulties that tend to inhibit living the life of virtue and piety in full, and he does this by appealing to probability as the guide to life.

Bristol Cathedral

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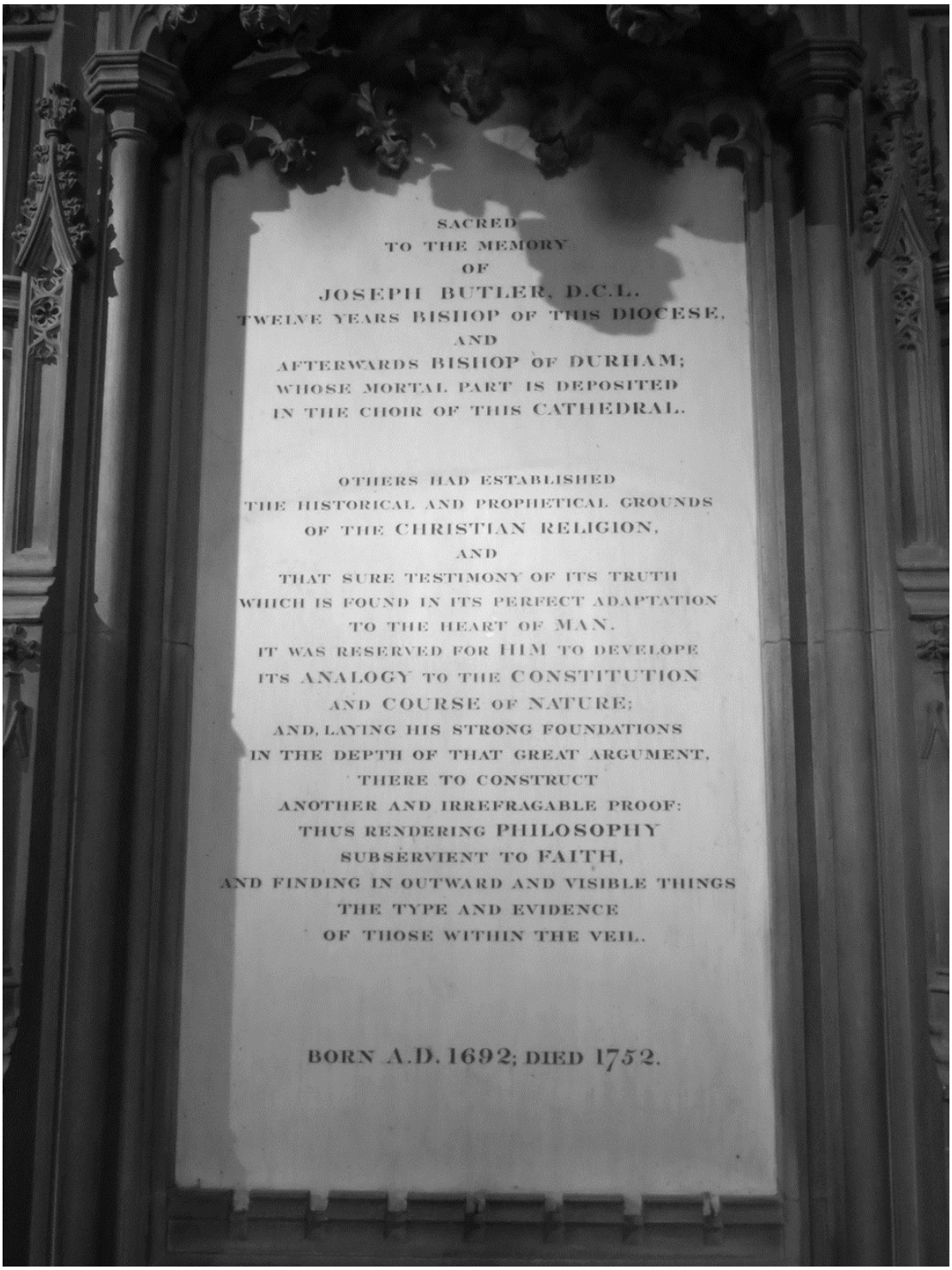
The large wall monument was created in 1834, paid for by subscription. The inscription on this was worded by the Poet Laureate Robert Southey – himself born in Bristol. North Transept.



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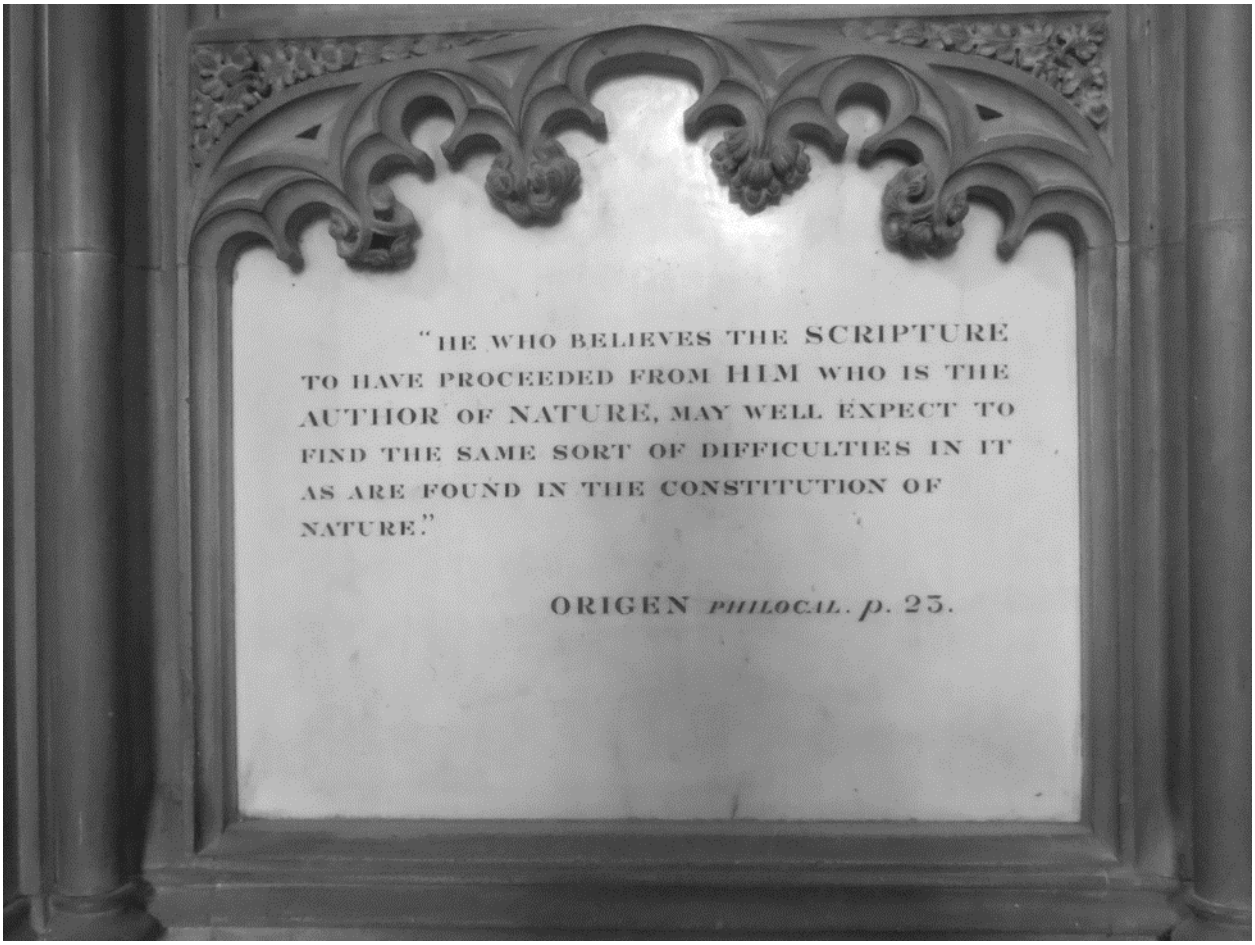

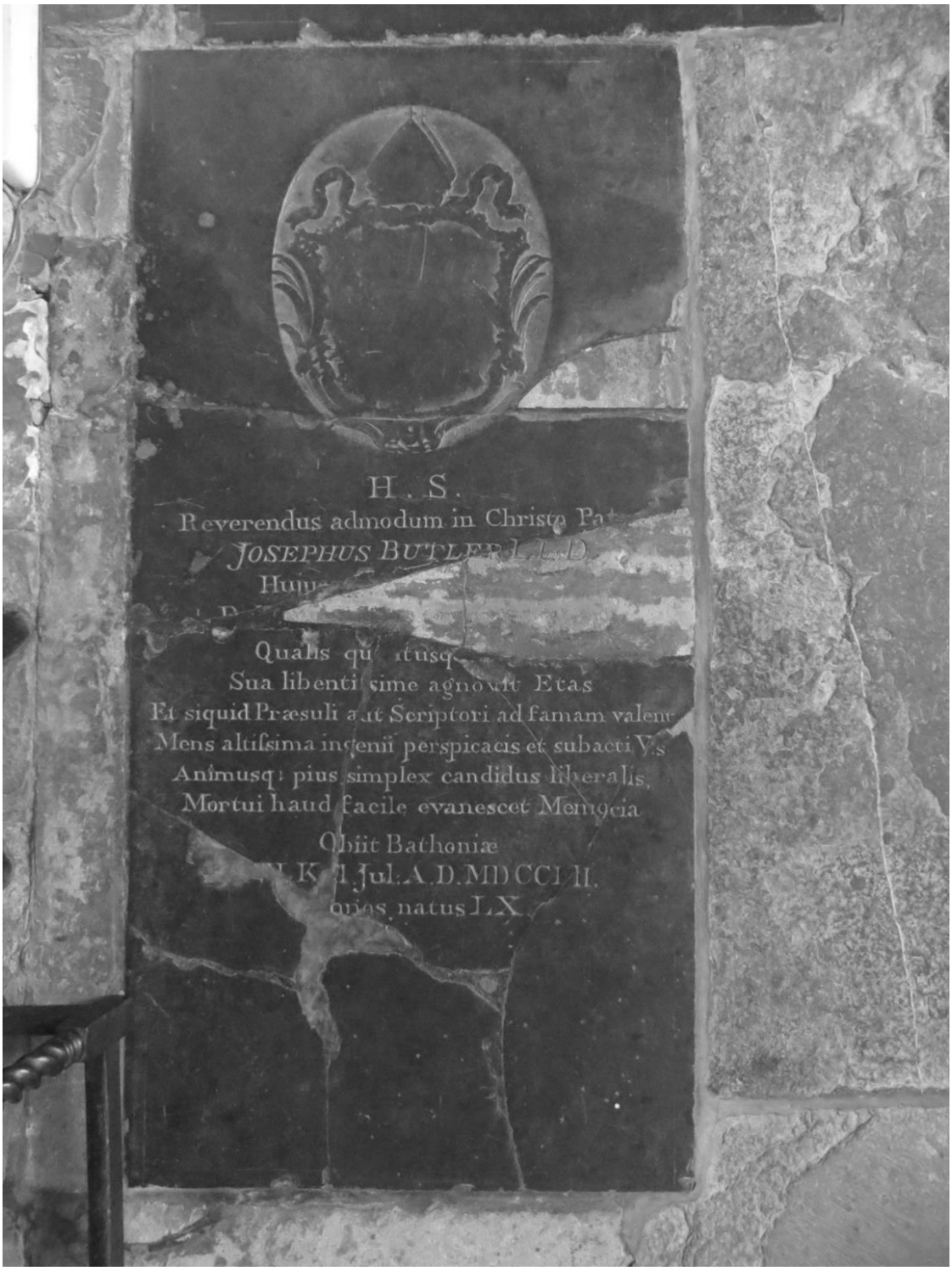

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This damaged black floor stone was the original and is closest to his remains in the Eastern Lady Chapel.

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The brass plaque was put up with the same wording (probably in the early 20th c.), as the floor stone was becoming illegible.

BISHOP BUTLER PRESENTING THE ANALOGY TO QUEEN CAROLINE, window of Truro Cathedral. For a fuller description of representations of Butler at Truro, see https://www.cornishstainedglass.org.uk/mgstc/chapter12.xhtml#window_n30

3 Butler's Method in Pastoral Philosophy

Butler's method in matters of ethics and religion is that of the common sense of ordinary people of good will, he advises us all to trust our judgment, sense of discretion and prudence before indulging in over-refined intellectualizing or sophisticated theories.

> [15] For the conclusion of this, let me just take notice of the danger of over-great refinements; of going beside or beyond the plain, obvious, first appearances of things, upon the subject of morals and religion. The least observation will shew how little the generality of men are capable of speculations. Therefore morality and religion must be somewhat plain and easy to be understood: it must appeal to what we call plain common sense, as distinguished from superior capacity and improvement; because it appeals to mankind. Persons of superior capacity and improvement have often fallen into errors which no one of mere common understanding could. Is it possible that one of this latter character could even of himself have thought that there was absolutely no such thing in mankind as affection to the good of others; suppose of parents to their children; or that what he felt upon seeing a friend in distress was only fear for himself; or, upon supposition of the affections of kindness and compassion, that it was the business of wisdom and virtue to set him about extirpating them as fast as he could? And yet each of these manifest contradictions to nature has been laid down by men of speculation as a discovery in moral philosophy; which they, it seems, have found out through all the specious appearances to the contrary. This reflection may be extended further. (FS 5.15)

Butler's Method in Ethics and Religion

Philosophy, religion, and ethics have at least this in common: they are concerned with the care of the whole person. Historically, the favored phrase has been "care of the soul," but today words like 'soul,' 'mind,' and 'supernatural' are more distractive than evidential. The points we need to make in presenting Butler's ideas about the guide to life are best made in the natural language of physicalism, that is, the language that refers to our common experience in the world and accepts the received modes of inference from that experience, usually defended by appeal to analogy. We do, of course, expound doctrines, defend theories, and present argument for the claims we favor. That we are all biased to one degree or another in no way absolves us from presenting evidence and argumentation that will stand up in the court of public opinion. We have put great evidence on the identity narrative as expounded by Butler not merely because we "love to hear the story," but because the story serves as a backbone (if not a bedrock) in our deliberations regarding how we are to live.

In some passages, Butler is not explicit about his methods, we can infer that he uses two approaches to his subject matter. For ethics, he uses hypothetical examples taken from common human behavior and draws conclusions from how the passions can interact in the most beneficial way. Regarding religion, he favors arguing by analogy. He uses the appeal to analogy between what is contested and what was previously accepted by the opponent in his discussion of natural theology and in support of the truth of Christianity.

His underlying assumption of the first, ethical, line of thought is that passions, including those often seen as doing harm, have uses that are beneficial. Since they are in Butler's view given by God, they must be good if used appropriately. Some cases of anger play out as resentment and serve to motivate actions that help to restore justice and are motivated in part by the negative passion of hatred of injustice. Self-love can be taken as and often is narrow and constricted, pure selfishness at the expense of others, but responsibly managed self-love can become a passion for taking responsibility for yourself and not being an undue burden to others. Many of us see love of one's neighbor as a positive passion, but even this commendable love must be restricted when it comes to sex and extended so as not to neglect neighbors who are strangers.

The issues here cannot be dealt with by passing out slogans or memes. They indicate deep and dangerous fault lines and require personalized, interactive philosophical attention using the methods exemplified by Butler, but with roots extending back at least to Aristotle and forward on to Wittgenstein. The method used by these people can be put into words, but even the most adroit codification will be helpful only to those who are already caught up in the process and who have a long, personal history of encountering and moving beyond obstacles and sticking points. It seems and has seemed to many people that we humans, children of God or not, have full plates of moral and ethical trials and temptations (which are perhaps necessary to build character) but have no need or use for and are distracted by having to sort out the two faces of human nature. The answer is that, as we have repeatedly stated, in order to discover the guide to life, the object of our inquiry, we must simultaneous get our act together as individual moral agents and as a community, society, or commonwealth with a moral economy in accord with the moral economy of nature as a whole.

To the extent that persons are bossed around and herded like sheep under an authoritarian government they have no chance of reaching moral maturity. Thus, we are confronted with both moral and intellectual trials. These trials are not to test what we already know but to teach through experience what we do not know and need to know. We all share the same life cycle: at birth we have no autonomy, then over time the child takes on responsibility for itself by means of dealing with the moral and intellectual challenges in addition to the obvious physical challenge of staying alive.

The ancient goal of a sound mind in a sound body is as prominent in Butler's thought as anywhere. At the point of death, the physical body, having served its purpose, breaks away and returns to the elements, but, according to Butler in his dissertation, "Of Personal Identity," the locus of moral responsibility formerly associated with that body is able to survive death as the

same person and therefore subject to possible rewards and punishments after death analogous to the rewards and punishments nature imposed in the present life.

He then provides examples of how passions including ones believed to be in conflict can produce positive results. This approach is like the concept of ideal types used by the sociologist Max Weber. It has the strength that it is easy to understand, and the logical arguments make a compelling case. For example, it is now generally accepted, at least in theory, that a rich person who gives up a few luxuries and donates the savings to charity may end up better off from a purely self-interested point of view.

In his *Phenomenology of Moral Experience*,[40] Maurice Mandelbaum groups Butler with Richard Price, David Hume, and Adam Smith as 18th century writers who admitted the distinction between descriptive and normative statements, but in no way allowed the distinction to preclude ethical inquiry from investigating problems concerning matters of fact.

The second approach is arguing by analogy. He uses this approach is his discussion of natural theology and in support of the truth of Christianity. This is the equivalent of looking for patterns and similarity in behavior between different phenomena. The problem is that no analogy is valid but only likely to a greater or lesser degree. However, it is suggestive. As mentioned previously, Butler relies on probability. And probability can be far less than even odds and still be actionable.

On some formulations, an appeal to the burden of proof may be deductive (demonstrative). Thus,

- My opponent has the burden of proof (or the burden of presenting evidence).
- My opponent has not discharged the burden.
- Therefore, the denial of my opponent's position is actionable.

Butler's first principle of method is stated in 5.15 of *Fifteen Sermons* (1729):

> [15a] For the conclusion of this, let me just take notice of the danger of over-great refinements; of going beside or beyond the plain, obvious, first appearances of things, upon the subject of morals and religion. The least observation will shew how little the generality of men are capable of speculations. Therefore, morality and religion must be somewhat plain and easy to be understood, it must appeal to what we call plain common sense, as distinguished from superior capacity and improvement; because it appeals to mankind.
>
> [15b] Persons of superior capacity and improvement have often fallen into errors which no one of mere common understanding could. Is it possible that one of this latter character could even of himself have thought that there was absolutely no

[40] Glencoe: Free Press, 1955, p, 13

> such thing in mankind as affection to the good of others; suppose of parents to their children; or that what he felt upon seeing a friend in distress was only fear for himself; or, upon supposition of the affections of kindness and compassion, that it was the business of wisdom and virtue to set him about extirpating them as fast as he could?
>
> [15c] And yet each of these manifest contradictions to nature has been laid down by men of speculation as a discovery in moral philosophy, which they, it seems, have found out through all the specious appearances to the contrary.

Throughout this book, our theme has been that the objections to religion are serious and need to be investigated with care from the point of view of truth seeking and not from any sectarian bias. Some objections are fallacious and may be disposed of, but the main appeal that Butler makes is the appeal to ignorance. Most objections to religion cannot be answered and proved wrong, but what we can show is that the objections are not actionable and that in order to justify living a life guided by virtue and piety appeal to probability, even a probability less than an even chance, may be enough.

Thus, in 15a above Butler appeals to common sense. This principle is fundamental. It cannot be that in order to practice religion without hypocrisy one must have highly refined intellectual understanding.

Then in 15b Butler balances the first point by showing that a refined intellect, such as he often displays, is useful in refuting the opponents of religion.

Finally, in 15c Butler again affirms common sense as superior to the modern "discoveries" even though the "men of speculation" often appear to carry the day. Butler claims that these alleged discoveries are pseudo-scientific outcomes.

Regardless of who makes the inference, the general canons of argumentation require that as we move stepwise through the argument each inference be warranted or licensed by some generally accepted principle. Butler does not go into great detail, relying primarily on commonplace examples, but he clearly thinks that in attempting to decide a question we should try to gather all the evidence available, present it in the form of a cumulative case, and judge the outcome in terms of probability and the effect of the whole argument as so presented. Butler never presents a systematic exposition of his method. We get mostly a series of precepts and some brief statements of methodological significance. The premises that are apparently assumed, the various precepts, and in many cases the arguments are often set out in painstaking detail. At the end of the first three of the *Fifteen Sermons*, Butler sums up the whole argument in a series of statements. If possible, he would prefer to let readers draw their own conclusions:

> … the sake of this whole class of readers, for they are of different capacities, different kinds, and get into this way from different occasions, I have often wished, that it had been the custom to lay before people nothing in matters of argument but

> premises, and leave them to draw conclusions themselves; which, though it could not be done in all cases, might in many. (FS Pref 2)

Again, following his method of being guided by everyday observation, Butler notes that our human nature is adapted to certain actions, but we are also capable to do other actions, actions that do not correspond to our nature. Actions that correspond to the nature of the agent are natural actions; those disproportionate to our nature are unnatural. As Butler states it:

> That an action is correspondent to the nature of the agent does not arise from its being agreeable to the principle which happens to be the strongest: for it may be so and yet be quite disproportionate to the nature of the agent. The correspondence, therefore, or disproportion, arises from somewhat else. This can be nothing but a difference in nature and kind, altogether distinct from strength, between the inward principles. (FS 3.9)

The word 'therefore' indicates this sentence is a conclusion. Butler insists that we cannot determine what corresponds. What does make an action correspondent with our nature and therefore natural is that it corresponds to a superior principle. "Reasonable self-love and conscience are the chief or superior principles in the nature of man: because an action may be suitable to this nature, though all other principles be violated; but becomes unsuitable, if either of those are." It soon becomes obvious that the primary truth Butler is seeking is the "rule of life," and it is obvious that the rule of life is the way of life that will lead to the most profound happiness. For many religious people and certainly for Butler, this rule of life is the law of love, the life grounded in following virtue and piety:

> Conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way. Duty and interest are perfectly coincident; for the most part in this world, but entirely and in every instance if we take in the future and the whole; this being implied in the notion of a good and perfect administration of things. Thus they who have been so wise in their generation as to regard only their own supposed interest, at the expense and to the injury of others, shall at last find, that he who has given up all the advantages of the present world, rather than violate his conscience and the relations of life, has infinitely better provided for himself, and secured his owns interest and happiness. (FS.3.9)

The analogical method appeals to the premises already accepted by the opponent, to drawing an analogy between what the advocate proposes and what is already granted by the opponent at least in practice. The probability Butler appeals to is not necessarily a high probability, or even more than an even chance. He argues that for purposes of determining practice, far less than an even chance is often enough. Again, what the advocate needs to show is

that the case in question is analogous to cases already decided by the opponent if not by common practice. In law as well as philosophy and theology the standard of proof required is equivalent to the probability that is actionable. Examples are commonplace. For example, products are recalled even when the chance of anyone being hurt by use is far less than an even chance. "Acceptable risk" is another phrase often used. Imagine a police officer informing drivers that the road ahead was dangerous, but about 8 out of 10 were making it through without harm. If this analogy holds, then the proof of religion will be enough even if it falls short of certainty, even if it falls short of an even chance. At least for practical purposes, which is what we, following Butler, are discussing, all that is required for sufficiency is that the conclusion we reach be actionable on analogy with standards of sufficiency we are already committed to in practice.

Unlike deductive reasoning, analogical and probabilistic inference requires consideration of the total evidence considered as a cumulative case. In accord with this principle and the priority of practice, this book sets out not only what Butler said, but also his reception down through the years, and how his way of life can be practiced today.

William Lane Craig (2004), has written that: "some of us want to try to bring back into theology the kind of clear thinking that it once had in figures such as, as Swinburne said, Aquinas, and the medievals, and Butler and Paley and others. And this is going to be a slow and laborious process that may take generations." [41] Besides advocating for Butler, Craig shows strong partiality for Anglo-American Analytic philosophy:

> Indeed, I should say that the relevance of philosophy to apologetics is so great that even if you do not specialize in philosophical apologetics but choose to go into some other type of apologetics, you would do well to take a strong dose of analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy is the kind of philosophy that predominates in the Anglophone world. This style of philosophizing contrasts sharply with that of Continental philosophy. Whereas Continental philosophy tends to be obscure, imprecise, and emotive, analytic philosophy lays great worth and emphasis on clarity of definitions, careful delineation of premisses [sic], and logical rigor of argumentation. Unfortunately, theology has for a long time learned to follow the lead of Continental philosophy, which tends to result in darkness being piled upon darkness. The renaissance of Anglo-American Philosophy of Religion over the last 40 years has shown that important apologetical issues can be brilliantly illuminated through the light of philosophical analysis.[42]

[41] Transcript of William Lane Craig, "Advice to Christian Apologists," lecture delivered at Calvin College, 2004. https://www.reasonablefaith.org/videos/lectures/advice-to-christian-apologists-calvin-college/

[42] https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/apologetics/apologetics-training-advice-to-christian-apologists/

Richard Swinburne (1977), Professor Emeritus of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford University, has written in favor of the Analytic style and mentions Butler, among others, as an exemplar of how to do theology right.

> "It is one of the intellectual tragedies of our age that when philosophy in English-speaking countries has developed high standards of argument and clear thinking, the style of theological writing has been largely influenced by the continental philosophy of Existentialism, which, despite its considerable other merits, has been distinguished by a very loose and sloppy style of argument. If argument has a place in theology, large-scale theology needs clear and rigorous argument. That point was very well grasped by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, by Berkeley, Butler, and Paley. It is high time for theology to return to their standards."[43]

The question of concern in this book is not the classification of Butler as belonging to the Analytic school, or the general value of Analytic philosophy, but the exclusivity claimed for Anglo-American Analytic philosophy as the best laid road to the truth. Craig (2004) is effusive not just on the merits of the Analytic but on its superiority to all its methodological rivals:

> By employing the high standards of reasoning characteristic of analytic philosophy we can powerfully formulate apologetic arguments for both commending and defending the Christian worldview. In recent decades, analytic philosophers of religion have shed new light on the rationality and warrant of religious belief, on arguments for the existence of God, on divine attributes such as necessity, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, and goodness, on the problem of suffering and evil, on the nature of the soul and immortality, on the problem of miracles, and even on peculiarly Christian doctrines like the Trinity, incarnation, atonement, original sin, revelation, hell, and prayer. The wealth of material which is available to the Christian apologist through the labor of analytic philosophers of religion is breath-taking.[44]

Analytic philosophy is part of the general program of truth-seeking, and to the extent that analytic philosophers are concerned with the rule of life, they search for the rule of life just as they search for any truth. The highest-level generalization for the whole process is that if one wants to seek truth the best method is collective construction and criticism of the evidence arranged as a cumulative case that produces a significant effect.

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[43] Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 7.

[44] William Lane Craig, https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/apologetics/apologetics-training-advice-to-christian-apologists/

As a pastor and an apologist Butler used these methods to achieve the effect of conversion to virtue and piety as a way of life. Butler would have agreed with Wittgenstein (2005) that, "As is frequently the case with work in architecture, work on philosophy is actually closer to working on oneself,"[45] and the whole drift of his work shows that the best road to conversion to piety and virtue was not by didactic preaching but by removal of objections and impediments from the natural course of human development into a person of virtue and piety preparing to die the death of the righteous. Living the life of piety and virtue corresponds to seeing the world as a moral economy governed by the Deity.

From this point of view, seeing the world as a moral economy governed by a deity entails seeing the objections and impediments to religion and ethics more as excuses than as worthy objections of intellectual and ethical standing. As a pastor Butler was under a vocational imperative to do what he could to deprive people of these excuses, but to deprive people of excuses in a manner that is ethical and effective requires that the methods of analytic philosophy be used as the tools of choice.

Butler died in 1752, but he remains alive and well as a colleague in philosophy of religion. This point is established in the literature. The religion of today and to come does not just emerge out of fertile soil. There are currents of great force which we can barely engage let alone control. The great texts help us to chart the currents. Regarding Butler there are the ancients such as Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. Medieval writers, especially of the English church, are just as essential to reckon with, as is Dante and Thomas. Some see Butler's romantic quest to rescue the Church of England as Quixotic. Comparison has also been made to the hunt for Moby-Dick. Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) is strongly associated with Queen Caroline of Ansbach, with whom Butler met regularly once he was a bishop.

Some of Butler's methodological comments are well-known and frequently quoted; others are tucked away in parts of his work that get less attention today. For example, our true happiness, mentioned earlier, is not explained until the sermons of the love of God:

> When we speak of things so much above our comprehension, as the employment and happiness of a future state, doubtless it behooves us to speak with all modesty and distrust of ourselves. But the Scripture represents the happiness of that state, under the notions of *seeing God, seeing him as he is, knowing as we are known, and seeing face to face.* These words are not general or undetermined but express a particular determinate happiness. And I will be bold to say, that nothing can account for, or come up to these expressions, but only this, that God himself will be an object to our faculties; that he himself will be our happiness, as distinguished from

[45] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Big Typescript.* Edited and translated by C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue. Blackwell, 2005, p. 300e.

> the enjoyments of the present state which seem to arise, not immediately from him, but from the objects he has adapted to give us delight. (FS 14.16)

Both Butler's vocabulary and his method of using evidence in his argumentation matter greatly in Butler, but we should remember the only safe generalization is that his words are the words of ordinary speech, and his arguments follow the patterns of the common discourse regarding matters of virtue, piety, and the rule of life.

Butler nowhere disparages pleasure and enjoyment. He thinks the reason we have desires is to guide us to the objects which, once attended will give us pleasure. The trouble with the worldly enjoyments, the pleasures that depend on our bodies and the objects to which they are attracted is only that they are not fully satisfying; they leave us hungry for more. And not just hungry but craving and yearning, anxious and frustrated.

> To conclude: Let us suppose a person tired with care and sorrow, and the repetition of vain delights which fill up the round of life; sensible that every thing here below, in its best estate, is altogether vanity. Suppose him to feel that deficiency of human nature, before taken notice of; and to be convinced that God alone was the adequate supply to it. What could be more applicable to a good man, in this state of mind, or better express his present wants and distant hopes, his passage through this world as progress towards a state of perfection, than the following passages in the devotions of the royal prophet? They are plainly in a higher and more proper sense, applicable to this, than they could be to any thing else. (FS 14.17)

Our original and continuing concern is whether it is possible for a sensible and rational person in today's world to adopt virtue and piety as a way of life. Following Butler, our thesis is that virtue and piety can be taken seriously as the rule of life only if that way of life is coincident with the way of life directed toward our happiness. This is summed up in the cool hour passage, "yet, that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it." (FS. 11.20)[46]

Butler concludes his second sermon on the love of God (FS.14) with a string of quotations, all from the Book of Psalms, and all pertaining to the longing for God that Butler and the Psalmist find inherent in human nature.

> *I have seen an end of all perfection.* [Psalm 119.96]

[46] "Happiness," which we have followed Butler in using throughout, is perhaps not the best word to use here, but since Butler uses it (along with interest, benefit, felicity, and others), we will continue to refer to "happiness" in our exposition.

> *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is all the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*[Psalm 73.25,26]
>
> *Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks: so longeth my soul after thee, 0 God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before him?* [Psalm 42.1,2]
>
> *How excellent is thy loving kindness, 0 God! and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house: and thou shall give them drink of thy pleasures, as out of the river. For with thee is the well of life: and in thy light shall we see light.* [Psalm 36.7-9]
>
> *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and receivest unto thee: he shall dwell in thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* [Psalm 65.4]
>
> *Blessed is the people, 0 Lord, that can rejoice in thee: they shall walk in the light of thy countenance. Their delight shall be daily in thy name; and in thy righteousness shall they make their boast. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy loving kindness they shall be exalted.* [Psalm 89.15-17]
>
> *As for me, I will behold thy presence in righteousness: and when I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it.* [Psalm 17.15]
>
> *Thou shalt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is the fullness of joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.* [Psalm 16.11]

The point has been made in a more prosaic manner:

> Butler's aim is to use the circumstantial, cumulative, probable, but ultimately compelling logic of the ancients in accord with the most modern reflection to challenge all forms of cynicism, egoism, deism, and atheism. He, like Socrates, wants to leave his opponents disarmed, disconcerted, confused, and therefore receptive to whatever help they can get from nature and nature's God. Using constancy of tone as much as forensic logic, Butler confronted the cocksure, the despisers of religion, cultured or not. Much of what we find in Butler can, today, only be described as quaint, but what remains, and what matters, is "Bishop Butler's feeling for the mystery surrounding human life." (White, 2006, p 2)

When evidence is presented in full, and the supporting argumentation demonstrates a cumulative, narrative case without an attempt to impose on readers, without suppression, misrepresentation, or fabrication of evidence, then we may expect the results of the inquiry will

be as widely accepted as would be possible given the present state of public and professional opinion. Butler takes nature as normative, meaning of course *our* nature, the nature that is God's creation, and those social institutions, especially language, that are widely received and deeply established.

Another way of presenting Butler's method is in terms of attribution. Many people simply believe there is a God who created and governs all that is. Many others require proof but are satisfied that such proof is available. In either case, it follows from the claim the God exists that the natural world, the humans (said to be created in God's image), the many products of human creative urges (art), and the revelation of God through scripture, all of it, is prima facie attributable to God. There are, of course, many reasons to doubt the attribution, and Butler's work may be described as an effort to save the attribution at least regarding its practical consequences. The consequences of accepting the attribution are of course, that one will live a life of virtue and piety. Regarding the moral economy of the world (part I of the *Analogy*), the Bible (part II of the *Analogy*), and human nature so far as we understand it, Butler's method is most often *ad hominem*[47] and analogical. That is, he tries to show that his opponents have made different judgments in different cases but are unable to find an observable difference to justify their difference in judgment:

> The analogy here proposed to be considered, is of pretty large extent, and consists of several parts; in some, more, in others, less exact. In some few instances perhaps, it may amount to a real practical proof; in others not so. Yet in these it is a confirmation of what is proved other ways. It will undeniably show, what too many want to have shown them, that the system of religion both natural and revealed, considered as a system, and prior to the proof of it, is not a subject of ridicule, unless that of nature be so too. And it will afford an answer to almost all objections against the system both of natural and revealed religion; though not perhaps an answer in so great a degree, yet in a very considerable degree an answer, to the objections against the evidence of it: for objections against a proof, and objections against what is said to be proved, the reader will observe are different things. (AR.Intro.12)
>
> Now, in the evidence of Christianity, there seems to be several things of great weight, not reducible to the head, either of miracles, or the completion of prophecy in the common acceptation of the words. But these two are its direct and fundamental proofs; and those other things, however considerable they are, yet

[47] '*Ad hominem*' refers to the form of Butler's argument not in the sense of hurling personal insults at one's opponent but rather to appealing to points that need not be defended with argument since the opponent has already granted (or stipulated) the point. The stock example of this type of ad hominem in Butler is that in arguing against the deists Butler does not need to prove God's existence since the deists have already agreed that God exists.

> ought never to be urged apart from its direct proofs, but always to be joined with them. Thus the evidence of Christianity will be a long series of things, reaching, as it seems, from the beginning of the world to the present time, of great variety and compass, taking in both the direct, and also the collateral proofs and making up, all of them together, one argument the conviction arising from which kind of proof may be compared to what they call the effect in architecture or other works of art; a result from a great number of things so and so disposed, and taken into one view. …. I shall endeavour to give some account of the general argument now mentioned, consisting both of the direct and collateral evidence, considered as making one argument; this being the kind of proof upon which we determine most questions of difficulty concerning common facts, alleged to have happened, or seeming likely to happen; especially questions relating to conduct. (AR 2.7.2)

Summation

Here are the main stages of Butler's argument:

- The object of inquiry is truth and there is no shame in learning from errors of past.
- We are in an apparent state of probation and need a guide to life to see us through.
- We find in the tradition four candidates for adoption as the rule of life: (1) the law of nature apparent in the course and constitution of the natural world, (2) the conscience installed in our human nature, (3) the way of life reveled in the canon of the scripture, together with the Church and its associated institutions, and (4) probability, which since antiquity has been considered a guide to life.
- Both critics and defenders of the faith have long pointed out that all four candidates present aspects that make them as guides to life unsuitable and as attributed to God unlikely.
- The objections having been stated, the philosopher assembles a portfolio of what the questioner will likely accept as premises and constructs a reply.

Butler's methods are the methods of ordinary speech and the law; he does not use a specialized philosophical or theological terminology. Whether informally or in a court of law people come together to settle disputes about their practical implications. In pursuit of such ends people gather evidence, and refrain from concealing evidence. The evidence is then presented in the form of argumentation, all along in a manner that avoids fallacy such that the opponent might object to.

By calling our work introductory we mean to indicate that it may serve as a gateway to the study of Bishop Butler. Those who decide for reasons of their own to take up a good, annotated, critical edition of Butler, supplemented by variorum editions, and complemented by the whole body of the critical and expository literature, the history of his life and works, and their reception over the course of the past 300 years.

Those who make seeking the truth the business of their lives take up the study of Bishop Butler only if they see Butler as an aid to reflection in seeking the truth. There may or may not be a religious motivation for such a concentration of effort.

We find the idea that all persons regardless of inherited cultural capital ought to survey the full range of evidence and draw their own conclusion compelling; just as we find the notion that others—authorities or counter-authorities—should engage in force-feeding Butler, or any philosophy or religion, on anyone to be heinous, a rape of the mind. Butler remarks he would like to write by supplying premises only leaving people to draw their own conclusions.

II. Perennial Problems[48] Presented in the Texts of Bishop Butler.

Our treatment of virtue and piety concentrates on showing how obviously human nature at least seems adapted to virtue. We humans can tell the difference between right and wrong, and we have free will enough to be the agents of our actions. There is much disagreement on points, but such conflict takes place within the moral constitution of nature and the moral economy of the world.

Evil, pain, and suffering will inevitably be raised as evidence that the world is not adapted to virtue and that in many cases virtue is not coincident with happiness. Being good is no guarantee that good things will happen to you—that your life will be one of pleasure and joy. The Bible is clear on that. The story of Job makes this point.[49] But happiness is more than pleasure.

Dinesh D'Souza presented a lucid summary of the present state of play as regards atheistic critics of Butler. ["Staring into the Abyss." *Christianity Today* (March 17, 2009].

> To understand Singer, it's helpful to contrast him with "New Atheists" like Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Richard Dawkins. The New Atheists say we can get rid of God but preserve morality. They insist that no one needs God in order to be good; atheists can act no less virtuously than Christians. (And indeed, some atheists do put Christians to shame.) Even while repudiating the Christian God, Dawkins has publicly called himself a "cultural Christian."
>
> But this position creates a problem outlined more than a century ago by the atheist philosopher Nietzsche. The death of God, Nietzsche argued, means that all the Christian values that have shaped the West rest on a mythical foundation. One may, out of habit, continue to live according to these values for a while. Over time,

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[48] 'Theism' is not synonymous with 'Christianity' or with 'religion.' There are theistic religions other than Christianity (Judaism, Islam) and there are non-theistic religions. Unitarian-Universalists may or may not be theists. There are also some forms of theism that do not invoke a benevolent deity. The discussion here concerns those forms of theism that do involve the all-benevolent deity.

[49] "Bishop Joseph Butler, the eighteenth-century founder of Natural Theology in England, didn't know from gene pools, but he considered it self-evident that *it is in our constitution* to condemn falsehood, violence, and injustice. In his day it was called providence: the assumption that virtue and happiness are perfectly balanced by an invisible guiding hand. Even Job knew enough to question that." (Neiman, 2008, p. 16) The English tradition of natural theology was well under way before Butler's work appeared. As an empiricist Butler found compelling evidence that virtue and happiness coincide to a high degree and that there are cases such as that of Job which we cannot explain. His reply is in terms of an appeal to human ignorance.

> however, the values will decay, and if they are not replaced by new values, man will truly have to face the prospect of nihilism, what Nietzsche termed "the abyss."
>
> Nietzsche's argument is illustrated in considering two of the central principles of Western civilization: "All men are created equal" and "Human life is precious." Nietzsche attributes both ideas to Christianity. It is because we are created equal and in the image of God that our lives have moral worth and that we share the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Nietzsche's warning was that none of these values make sense without the background moral framework against which they were formulated. A post-Christian West, he argued, must go back to the ethical drawing board and reconsider its most cherished values, which include its traditional belief in the equal dignity of every human life.
>
> Singer resolutely takes up a Nietzschean call for a "transvaluation of values," with a full awareness of the radical implications. He argues that we are not creations of God but rather mere Darwinian primates. We exist on an unbroken continuum with animals. Christianity, he says, arbitrarily separated man and animal, placing human life on a pedestal and consigning the animals to the status of tools for human well-being. Now, Singer says, we must remove Homo sapiens from this privileged position and restore the natural order. This translates into more rights for animals and less special treatment for human beings. There is a grim consistency in Singer's call to extend rights to the apes while removing traditional protections for unwanted children, people with mental disabilities, and the noncontributing elderly.

All well and good, but all well and irrelevant to any of the points Butler was making. For Butler virtue consisted in conformity to our human nature. That nature may continue to evolve on its own, but what it is is independent of how it was made. Butler did think that animal natures were radically different from human natures, but, again, the only practical question is whether you (whatever your species) have acted in a manner consistent with your nature. For Butler the human/animal separation is hardly arbitrary. Butler allowed that animals may have souls sufficient to survive after death, but he denied them a conscience of the sort found in humans. Again, suppose Butler was wrong on the human/animal dichotomy, suppose we are all on a continuum, the point remains that those and only those who follow their nature—whatever it is—can live a life of virtue and die the death of the righteous. The problems with Butler's position are not what the atheists old or new think they are. The problems with Butler's position are the varieties of self-deception and corruption of conscience and the possibility of a pirate nature with a pirate conscience or a Nazi nature with a Nazi conscience. Schafer (1983) notes that:

> Since it is philosophical egoism that [Viktor] Frankl is most centrally attacking, consideration of Butler's similar response to eighteenth century versions of the theory may help in understanding the issues involved. In particular it will help to

reveal some underlying views of ours—inherited perhaps from eighteenth and nineteenth century moral thought—that may play a part in maintaining the plausibility of certain fallacious arguments by which philosophical egoism seems to be supported.

4 Ethics: Defining Virtue

Butler's aim was to encourage people to adopt the life of virtue and piety. He proposed to do this in an evidentialist or empirical manner, and primarily by clearing away objections or anything that might deter people or serve as excuses for failing to be virtuous and pious. Butler uses evidence and argumentation much as philosophers have since there has been philosophy, but we must remember when reading Butler that the goal of the presentation is not assent to the conclusion stated as a proposition. Rather the goal for Butler as a preacher and as a pastor is to achieve a certain "effect," a term he borrows from architecture and all the arts,[50] and the desired effect is always practical, that is, refers to an action, specifically the performance of that action. Butler's moral philosophy is properly called teleological since he considers right action as a matter of following nature, both human nature and the whole natural world as of divine origin and governed by the original intent of the deity.

Butler recognizes that the evidence is not some one thing but rather is a greater or lesser portion of the total evidence, and however great or slight the evidence may be it can be arranged or configured in various ways—many different curves will pass through the same data points—and that it is both the selection and the arrangement of the evidence that constitutes the cumulative case which in turn produces the effect. There is no leap of faith here because even when we act on far less than an even chance we are acting in a way analogous to the way we act in all matters of the common life, meaning by "common life" the life we all share as members of a community.

The critics who have called Butler's statement of the case an *argumentum ad hominem* are correct, but this *ad hominem* is no fallacy; rather it is a strategy of using as premises of one's own points which the opponent either has granted or cannot help but grant.

Stripped down to its simplest form Butler's argument appeals to our observation of our life in the nature that surrounds us. Based on our experience of the world, it seems the simplest, most plausible explanation is that we are in a natural state that tests our virtue. It is not so much that we acquire virtue somehow and then have it tested, but that we acquire virtue by being tested by the challenge of living in the world. If Butler is right, there is a presumption in favor of serious, intentional, and determined participation in this natural process. An acknowledged presumption is not necessarily true; it is presumed true unless and until defeated by objection or rebuttal. Thus, to make his case, Butler must not only establish the presumption in favor of virtue but also reply to and defeat all plausible objections. Butler and many others accept the myth of divine origin as the context in which they work. Myths have the undoubted power to serve whole

[50] "Thus the evidence of Christianity will be a long series of things, reaching, as it seems, from the beginning of the world to the present time, of great variety and compass, taking in both the direct, and also the collateral proofs and making up, all of them together, one argument the conviction arising from which kind of proof may be compared to what they call the effect in architecture or other works of art; a result from a great number of things so and so disposed, and taken into one view." (AR 2.7.2)

peoples as a guide to life. The historicity of the myth is not especially important regarding its moral efficacy. What matters more than historical veracity is the moral and logical critique, the myths intrinsic ability to serve as a guide to life. *Tale of Two Cities* retains its moral significance even if the main characters are fictions.

Butler's views on ethics are not difficult to outline even if his terminology is sometimes a bit rough. He is clearly working on the project today most associated with David Hume. This empirical method in morals is based on seeing what inferences can be drawn from careful examination of the observed form of human nature.

Butler considered the existence of God as the best explanation for the whole natural world, the scripture that has come down to us, and this human nature, which was actively investigated from a religious and from a secular point of view by many writers of the time.

The great gambit, the bold opening move, is the claim that *virtue and happiness are coincident.* Those who want true happiness must aim to be virtuous, and those who pursue virtue will end up finding happiness as well. Almost every chapter will advance this theme. The individual chapters must take up more specific topics, but all are in accord with encouraging the practice of virtue in pursuit of happiness.

One of several statements of the primary thesis by Butler was, "Conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way. Duty and interest are perfectly coincident; for the most part in this world, but entirely and in every instance if we take in the future and the whole; this being implied in the notion of a good and perfect administration of things." (FS.3.9) This view, with its moral and religious implications, is open to serious objections and has been challenged since ancient times. Philosophers have taken up the issues professionally, but at least so far as practice is concerned, they are, or ought to be, of interest to all. Butler anticipates William James in that his concern is with choices that are of major importance (not trivial or inconsequential), that are still live for the agent and have not been previously decided for all practical purposes and forced so that not to decide is to decide.[51]

The question for Butler and for us is not whether optimism regarding the moral economy of nature is true but whether it is actionable for us knowing what we know and all the while unable to answer important objections. Firefighters and gas leak people often go out on calls considered actionable even when they doubt their services are needed. Butler, we take it, would have saved the boy who cried wolf a third time even when the others gave up after two false alarms. Butler would consider the third call dubious but actionable.[52]

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[51] William, James. "The Will to Believe." *The New World*, 5 (1896) 327-347.

[52] "Getting to the Heart of Psychopathy and Moral Responsibility," a master's thesis by Bert J. Terzian (Wilfrid Laurier University, 1999) includes a substantial discussion of Butler's theory of morals in relation to the psychopath. In Butler's terms, the psychopath is someone who lacks a conscience and while exceptional as far as normal humans go is not a true exception to the supremacy and authority of conscience.

Under the general heading of virtue ethics or the study of human character from a moral and religious point of view, the issue that runs through all this book is that of whether certain propositions are actionable. It is the action itself that concerns us here, not the verbalization of a theory. Philosophy becomes a way of life when an agent has developed a system of virtue and a system of piety enough to be actionable, to serve as the guide to life at least for such choices as are live, momentous, and forced. The trivial, the foreclosed, and those that can be put off indefinitely need not concern us. Apart from these Jamesian exclusions, we are to be guided by the evidence. **That is, we cannot be expected to give fair and full consideration of all the evidence when we are faced with a forced choice. The requirement to consider all the evidence presented as a cumulative case stands, but observance of that requirement does not absolve one from acting in a serious and open matter when the choice is forced, when not to act is tantamount to acting.**

Thus, the person of virtue may be inarticulate to the point of being unintelligible and yet live according to the moral law, live as a person of virtue and piety. Such a person would be one who loves God and God's creation in all its aspects, one who loves others and self with the same devotion, but still be unable to express this way of life in words or pictures or by any means other than by living life itself. Thus, Butler's main task is to conduct and express himself in such a way as to have the effect that people come to see for themselves that the life of virtue and of self-love are in perfect concert with self-interest:

> So that *Socrates* was not the first who endeavored to draw men off from laboring after, and laying stress upon other knowledge, in comparison of that which related to morals. Our province is virtue and religion, life and manners; the science of improving the temper and making the heart better. This is the field[53] assigned us to cultivate: how much it has lain neglected is indeed astonishing. Virtue is demonstrably the happiness of man; it consists in good actions, proceeding from a good principle, temper, or heart. Overt acts are entirely in our power. What remains is, that we learn to *keep our heart;* to govern and regulate our passions, mind, affections: that so we may be free from the impotencies of fear, envy, malice, covetousness, ambition; that we may be clear of these, considered as vices seated in the heart, considered as constituting a general wrong temper: from which general wrong frame of mind, all the mistaken pursuits, and far the greatest part of the unhappiness of life, proceed.[54] He who should find out one rule to assist us in this work, would deserve infinitely better of mankind, than all the improvers of other knowledge put together. [FS 15.16, emphasis added]

Philosophers like Butler prefer to keep their work conversational and occasional rather than systematic. When they come upon a controversial proposition they first ask about its meaning, the difference it would make in practice if someone acted on the stated principle.

[53] Today this field, now vast, is known as "motivation and self-help."
[54] One of the few passages in which Butler lists virtues and vices.

Regarding virtue, Butler states early on that virtue consists in following nature. He is also confident that conscience is the superior faculty we use in conducting the self-examination to determine if our actions and way of life follow nature. According to Butler, for us to follow our nature means for us to follow our conscience but saying that conscience tells us whether we are following conscience is not necessarily circular or question begging. Examples and counterexamples are helpful. We notice that Butler was concerned with alcohol misuse but says nothing about sex except for a single disparaging remark on adultery.[55] Answer to objections and counter examples regarding virtue:

> If it be said, that there are persons in the world, who are in great measure without the natural affections towards their fellow-creatures: there are likewise instances of persons without the common natural affections to themselves: but the nature of man is not to be judged by either of these, but by what appears in the common world, in the bulk of mankind. [FS 1.13]

> "From the rule which we laid down at the beginning, that one should practice one thing only for which his nature is best adapted." Plato's Republic (433a)

Virtue Apologetics and the Problem of the Failure of Conscience

G E M Anscombe is taken as the founder of modern virtue ethics, but she dismisses Butler saying he fails to consider that conscience can tell one to do horrid things. How could Anscombe have failed to consider the numerous passages in which Butler discusses the failings of conscience? Anscombe's rejection of Butler's notion of conscience as the supreme principle in human nature disregards the two full sermons on self-deception (or the corrupt conscience). It also runs counter to the analogies Butler proposed when he introduced the notion of the supremacy of conscience. A parent holds authority over a child analogous to the position of conscience in human nature. A parent who shows horrid judgment will lose custody of his or her children, but the notion of parental authority is not undermined. A civil magistrate who fails to rule properly may be discharged from office, but no one thinks the incompetence of some authorities undermines the whole notion of political rule. (AR 1.6.9) Clearly Anscombe is incorrect in claiming that Butler fails to consider cases of the fallibility of conscience, and just as clearly, she has no good grounds to dismiss the authority of conscience in human nature. The trouble is that no one familiar with her background has been able to explain how Anscombe could have made such errors, and no one familiar with the subject has been able to explain why so many uncritical readers have taken her point for granted. Butler also develops another argument for the supremacy of conscience (FS.2.1).[56]

[55] Butler lived in a time of excessive consumption of gin, sometimes called the Gin Craze.
[56] This argument was analyzed and critiqued by David McNaughlin (2013).

Coincidence of Virtue and Happiness

Butler acknowledges that Shaftesbury has shown beyond all contradiction that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness, and vice the misery of the human creature In many cases it is obvious that the virtuous tempers lead to tranquility and peace of mind, but the course of vice brings fear, shame, and vexation. (See 15S 3.8)

One of Butler's best known, and most challenging passages is the "cool hour," previously referenced.

> And to all these things may be added that religion, from whence arises our strongest obligation to benevolence, is so far from disowning the principle of self-love, that it often addresses itself to that very principle, and always to the mind in that state when reason presides, and there can no access be had to the understanding, but by convincing men that the course of life we would persuade them to is not contrary to their interest. It may be allowed, without any prejudice to the cause of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us; that they will, nay, if you please, that they ought to prevail over those of order, and beauty, and harmony, and proportion, if there should ever be, as it is impossible there ever should be, any inconsistence between them, though these last, too, as expressing the fitness of actions, are real as truth itself. Let it be allowed, though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good, as such, yet, that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it. [FS 11.20, emphasis added]

The phrase "cool hour" is uncommon, appearing only once in Butler's published writings. The word "cool" in some other connection but with the same meaning is used by Butler about 20 times. The cool hour as used here refers to a time of reflection when one is calm, dispassionate, and undistracted by emotions. With this maxim Butler seems to be claiming that if one does not accept the coincidence of duty and interest, then in cases of conflict between duty and interest, one chooses self-interest at the expense of duty.

Samuel Munroe (2019) remarks that the thesis of the coincidence of duty and interest does not fare well if we rely only on the appeal to experience, as Butler seems to prefer. Munroe then sketches a solution: "The internal harmony brought about by virtuous action provides the conceptual link between virtue and happiness that Butler's empirical observations lack. Virtue tends towards happiness because virtuous life is more harmonious and peaceful than vicious life. The vicious person is still subject to the pangs of conscience but refuses to heed them, and therefore is made unhappy. In his 'Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue,' Butler expresses

precisely this point, writing that, 'if human creatures are endued with…a moral faculty' then 'moral government must consist, in rendering them happy and unhappy…as they follow, neglect, or depart from, the moral rule of action interwoven in their nature' (DV 9).

In the "Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue," Butler makes some additional points which are essential to the reading presented in this book. For example, he stresses the importance of government as his root metaphor and of experience as the primary source of human knowledge such as it is. He clarifies that when he talks about evidence (that which is evident) he is usually thinking of the common language and the common behavior we all know from experience.

Butler argues for the elimination of unrefined hedonism, egoism but also utilitarianism, deism and atheism, also any overly refined intellectualism, leaving the field clear for the more favored principles of conscience and the passions, [Christian] scripture, nature, probability and reflection on our own human nature. Butler then shows that the action favored by moral probability, the conscientious and scriptural action, is also the action most in accord with, most closely following nature.

In recent scholarship Butler's moral theory is reviewed apart from its religious associations, a detachment widely but not universally considered fair and faithful to the text. Even when God and religious concepts are included in the discussion the notion of a future life and a providential design to the whole of usually neglected. Providence and the possibility of life after death are of the essence for Butler. As fate would have it, the section of his chapter on a future life which Butler cast out as more distracting than evidential and relegated to an appendix, the dissertation on personal identity, is the only section on the *Analogy* to get wide and sustained attention, usually with no regard to its whole in Butler's argument. **Butler's theory of personal identity expounded in brief follows.**

Bishop Joseph Butler [http://www.csun.edu/~ds56723/phil403/hout403locke.htm]

1. Butler agrees that memory reveals past stages of me.
2. BUT: consciousness of that past experience is not what *makes* that past experiencer me; rather, consciousness of personal identity *presupposes* personal identity.
3. On Locke's view, the unity-relation for person-stages is consciousness (memory).
4. Butler's claim: the unity-relation is either in place or it's not, regardless of what we remember. Consequently, **Locke's criterion is circular** (begs the question).
5. Loose & popular sense of "same" = sameness of life/organization of matter, not sameness of particles.
6. Strict & philosophical sense of "sameness" between A and B = everything true of A is also true of B and vice versa (**indiscernibility of identicals**).
7. Butler thought that identity is tied inextricably to our patterns of concern/anticipation.
8. But anticipation is justified only by strict identity; Locke's view denies strict identity; thus, Locke's view denies the justification of anticipation.

Summation

Admittedly morals do seem to vary—as social scientists are fond of pointing out, but Butler is more concerned with motivating people to act in accord with what they know by reflection to be the right way of living.

There is no great difficulty in presenting Butler's moral philosophy in the manner of an Aristotelian chart, or as a comprehensive perspective embracing ethics, politics, social philosophy, religion, and general philosophy. Unfortunately, as time went on, this sort of comprehensive teaching became conflated with authoritarian methods, which would have been anathema to Butler.

Chart of Virtues and Vices

This chart arranges some of Butler's concepts, implicit and explicit, in the manner of Aristotle. According to the scheme used here, we try to use the categories of excess and deficiency to identify the virtues as naturally as possible. In excess and deficient are not quantitative concepts as used here.

Regarding:	**Vice of Excess:**	**Virtue:**	**Vice of Deficiency:**
God of revelation	ritualism	piety	iconoclasm
God of reason	impersonal deity	submission	skepticism
atheism	lawlessness	humanism	credulity
pleasure (hedonism)	indulgence	enjoyment	abstinence
reason	cynicism	critical thinking	credulity
self-regard	egotism	self-love	altruism
social regard	tyranny	utility	impulsiveness
	insanity	enthusiasm	spiritual dryness
	scrupulosity	conscience	laxity
	disclosure	integrity	self-deception
	over-thinking	intellectualism	passional
	superstition	symbolic act	custom
	paternalism	benevolence	stinginess
	repression of passion	government of the passions, e.g. compassion	indulgence of passion
	leniency	forgiveness	vengeance

5 Religion: Evil, Pain, and Suffering

Ignorance: seems like and is a bad thing, frustrating our pursuit of happiness, but some types of ignorance may be suited to our condition and serve to the benefit of our probation. Common logic requires consideration of the total evidence, but the vastness of our ignorance precludes this. Thus, all inferences must be adjusted not just to the total evidence available but also to the lack of essential evidence, and then considered in terms of practical probability. Butler recognized that there are cases where the best choice still has less than an even chance of success. For example, in Sermon 15 he says: (Bullets added for clarity.)

- *Thirdly*, since the constitution of nature, and the methods and designs of providence, in the government of the world, are above our comprehension, we should acquiesce in, and rest satisfied with our ignorance, turn our thoughts from that which is above and beyond us, and apply ourselves to that which is level to our capacities, and which is our real business and concern.
- Knowledge is not our proper happiness. Whoever will in the least attend to the thing will see that it is the gaining, not the having of it, which is the entertainment of the mind.
- Indeed, if the proper happiness of man consisted in knowledge, considered as a possession or treasure, men who are possessed of the largest share would have a very ill time of it, as they would be infinitely more sensible than others, of their poverty in this respect. Thus, *he who increases knowledge would* eminently "increase sorrow."
- Men of deep research and curious inquiry should just be put in mind, not to mistake what they are doing. If their discoveries serve the cause of virtue and religion, in the way of proof, motive to practice, or assistance in it; or if they tend to render life less unhappy and promote its satisfaction; then they are most usefully employed.
- But bringing things to light, alone and of itself, is of no manner of use, any otherwise than as an entertainment or diversion. Neither is this at all amiss, if it does not take up the time which should be employed in better works.
- But it is evident that there is another mark set up for us to aim at; another end appointed us to direct our lives to: an end, which the most knowing may fail of, and the most ignorant arrive at.
- *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.* Which reflection of *Moses*, put in general terms, is, that the only knowledge, which is of any avail to us, is that which teaches us our duty, or assists us in the discharge of it. [FS 15.16]

- The economy of the universe, the course of nature, almighty power exerted in the creation and government of the world, is out of our reach. What would be the consequence, if we could really get an insight into these things, is very uncertain; whether it would assist us in, or divert us from, what we have to do in this present state.
- If then there be a sphere of knowledge, of contemplation and employment, level to our capacities, and of the utmost importance to us; we ought surely to apply ourselves with all diligence to this our proper business, and esteem every thing else nothing, nothing as to us, in comparison of it.
- Thus *Job*, discoursing of natural knowledge, how much it is above us, and of wisdom in general, says, *God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*
- Other orders of creatures may perhaps be let into the secret counsels of heaven, and have the designs and methods of providence, in the creation and government of the world, communicated to them: but this does not belong to our rank or condition.
- *The fear of the Lord, and to depart from evil,* is the only wisdom which man should aspire after, as his work and business. The same is said, and with the same connexion and context, in the conclusion of the book of *Ecclesiastes.*
- Our ignorance, and the little we can know of other things, affords a reason why we should not perplex ourselves about them; but no way invalidates that which is the *conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole concern of man.* [FS 15.16]

Butler is appealing not to deductive logic but to probable inference. In deductive logic, all that is required is that the premises are sufficient to entail the conclusion. Any other premises no matter how relevant they appear are irrelevant to the validity of the deduction. With probable inference additional premises do matter. The point of calling the inference probable is that it is not conclusive. Butler's point is that since what we do not know is vast, there may some additional evidence out there, unknown to us, that would change the strength of the probability of the argument.

Evil

Ignorance must be considered in making inferences of any kind—lack of evidence can be as significant as the presence of evidence—and the appeal to evidence is the front line of defense regarding the problem of evil.

Butler's text for Sermon XV, "Upon the Ignorance of Man," is Ecclesiastes viii. 16-17, a book of the wisdom literature that Butler, along with everyone else in his day, attributed to Solomon.

> When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth; then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it. (KJV)

In Butler's vision, the truth is wisdom in the conduct of life and is variously expressed as a rule of life found in the many monastic and quasi monastic systems. Butler favors the rule that is most natural for us, the rule that allows us to favor nature. But how can his be when our nature seems so corrupted and useless for the pursuit of piety and virtue? Butler proposes that human nature is ideally suited for one thing: for the test, trial, or probation of whether we can become what we were intended to be by the creator and at last reach our natural end or *telos.*

In maintaining that (1) we humans know little, but (2) at least know enough to live the life of virtue and piety, and (3) all we need to be religious by submitting to God's will is to conduct ourselves in accord with virtue and piety, Butler is working in the Christian mainstream:

> Chapter VIII. verse 17–"I beheld all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun : because, however much a man labour to seek it out yet he shall not find it. . . ." - Bishop Butler's sermon on "The Ignorance of Man" is based on this passage in Koheleth. [*Old Testament* Ecclesiastes or its author, traditionally believed to be Solomon, from Hebrew *qōheleth*.]
>
> These thoughts are expanded in the famous *Analogy of Religion*. There was much in the eighteenth century to bring home human ignorance. The discoveries of Copernicus and Newton had enlarged the boundaries of knowledge, and at the same time revealed an abyss of human ignorance. The Universe had become more vast, but man seemed to be much smaller. The enemies of religion made the most of it. How, they asked, is it possible to believe that a God who is the Creator and Governor of so stupendous a universe can concern Himself with the affairs of man or make any special revelation to such an insignificant being Butler perceived that the weapon furnished by the extent of man's ignorance was really double-edged. He saw that it might be used no less effectively against the objectors of religion as against its supporters. For, if man lives in such a remote and unimportant corner of the Universe, how certain it is that he can form but an imperfect inadequate notion of the scheme of the universe as a whole, and of the ends to which it is directed ? He is not in a position to criticise any of the detail of the arrangements of the world in which he lives. Yet he has been given sufficient light to show him what are the lines on which he should live. Not knowledge, but conduct, is the end of human life." **(Spooner's life of Butler (1901), ch iii)**

> Newman [1868] expressed the same thought, "Revelation was not given to us to satisfy doubts, but to make us better men. (*Parochial Sermons*, xviii) Walter Bagehot went further than Butler in his essay on "The Ignorance of Man." (*Literary Studies*, vol. II appendix) Were truths, such as the moral superintendence of God, His reward of virtue, punishment of vice, forced upon our minds by overwhelming evidence, so that we could feel no doubt about them, would not the inevitable result be that, in spite of ourselves, we should be rendered virtuous by nothing else than the hope of reward, and be deterred from vice solely by the fear of punishment. As things are now, the truths of Christianity are confirmed by our deepest moral convictions. (**A. Clutton-Brock, *The Ultimate Belief, 1916*)**

In his 1916 commentary Ecclesiastes, Minos Divine opines that:

> It is something akin to this spirit that Koheleth expresses in his so-called Agnosticism. He has no affinity with the modern dogma which we associate with the name of Spencer. "The limits of human knowledge recognised by Koheleth are only such as those which St. Paul acknowledged when he said, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part.' It is not the impossibility of apprehending the Divine existence of which the Preacher speaks, but the impossibility of comprehending all the order of His Providence—quite another matter. (Davison, *Wisdom Literature*, "Ecclesiasticus.") Hooker's confession is in keeping with the same thought. "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High ; whom, although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know Him not as indeed. He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. (*Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I.2)

Butler's final exhortation in the sermon is quoted from Revelation 15: 3-4, "Great and marvelous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." (KJV).

Between the initial statement of the scriptural text of the sermon and the final exhortation are two main sections, (1) Butler's exposition of the text and (2) four "consequences" that Butler sees as implied by the text. The questions for us are regarding the correctness of Butler's exposition of Solomon, both in terms of natural and revealed truth, and the correctness of the consequences both in terms of their general prudence and the extent to which they follow from the exposition.

None of this is incidental or aside to Butler's main theme. For Butler, the submission to the divine will urged here is the heart of religion and of ethics. Recognition of our ignorance is a

marked path leading us from our lives according to nature to recognition of and participation in the state of religion (of probation). Butler maintains that once these matters are considered in view of all the evidence available and presented as a cumulative case, we will have sufficient grounds to live in accord with virtue and piety. The sufficient grounds here is a probability or moral certainty. It may well be less than an even chance. Both the totality of the evidence and the shape of the cumulative case will vary over time or even from person to person at the same time.[57]

Butler's philosophy of religion is deeply contrarian. Most commentators, whether believers or unbelievers, have assumed that it is the religious adherents who add to the received public opinion "over belief" based on faith. The faithful accept what cannot be sufficiently supported by evidence; the unbelievers rest content with what knowledge human nature and the natural world are willing to yield. Butler understands [the author known as] Solomon as frustrated and confused by his lack of knowledge of the world and of God, its creator. All these lines are finely drawn in the exposition, after which Butler shows how firm a grounding for religion can be drawn from the affirmation of this ignorance. Solomon's reflections upon human nature, and human life; and upon the constitution of things get him nowhere. Butler claims to have followed the method of Solomon. After a thorough examination of the matter he is still unable in his ignorance to reconcile the works of God and the general providence with the *appearance* of things and what seems to be going on in the world. This mental vexation is painful, but because of our truth-seeking human nature we must persevere. (See FS.15.1)

So, Butler is taking Solomon as a paradigm of the "wisest and most knowing," and pointing to his great ignorance and perplexity, suggesting we are unlikely to do better. Out of this frustration with our ignorance, Butler would have us agree with the opponents of religion that it seems odd that a creator would endow human nature with high curiosity only to allow the hunger for knowledge to go unsatisfied.

According to the dynamic of our nature, the more we learn, the greater our craving to know more. Even if we had a comprehensive knowledge of nature, we would still be unsatisfied until we understood the meaning and purpose of the creation. (S11.5)

Butler's strategy here, and generally, is to admit the objection appealing to flaws or defects in the creation or in the scripture (the two books of revelation), but then to argue that given our limited knowledge of what God's work is and what that work is about, we cannot say with any certainty that the whole is not the work of a benevolent and omnipotent deity. Given that there is evidence against the deity but not conclusive evidence, we can go on to be impressed by the five "consequences" **of joy, gratitude, reverence, love, and trust**, Butler claims to see as following from the state of awe we find ourselves in when we finally realize how little any of us knows as regards the natural world but especially regarding our own human world and the government of the whole.

[57] Paley and Darwin are compared in Gould (2003).

Our ignorance extends well beyond the physical universe. What is the design of providence in the government of the world? The end, purpose, meaning? The nature of good and bad in action? All this extends far beyond our comprehension, but, and this is Butler's main point: lost as we are in the vastness of our ignorance at least we know enough to make it worthwhile to inquire how much we need to know "to enforce upon us religion and the practice of virtue." (FS.15.6)

Given that we have so little knowledge of the nature, workings, and purpose of creation, Butler's strategy of neutralizing objections to the basic claims of ethics and religion "by whatever means necessary" is a good one. In the standard, received, forensic rhetoric, the removal of objections is enough to prevail if there is a presumption in favor of the side the objections were directed against. For example, in Anglo-American criminal law, the defendant (the accused) enjoys a presumption of innocence at least in theory. At trial, the prosecutor raises objections to the accused's innocence, that is, the state presents direct evidence they think is sufficient to overcome the presumption of innocence. If the defense can defeat the objections, then the presumption of innocence prevails, and the defendant is released. Obviously such a defense does not prove anyone's innocence, but, and this is perhaps Butler's main point regarding ethics and religion, the defendant who is released on grounds the state's failure to prove guilt is just as free as one who whose innocence has been proved by direct evidence.

Butler has little to say in all his works about proving God's existence. What he assumes, as stated above, is that God's existence *has been proved*, and his warrant for this assumption is given in several references to various well-known proofs of God. Even if the proofs of God are no longer convincing for many people, what is left of those proofs may be enough to establish a presumption. In addition, Butler's arguments will remain fully effective when considered by those, who for whatever reason, acknowledge that God exists. In FS.15 all that Butler says regarding the proof of God's existence is: "And yet it is as certain that God made the world, as it is certain that effects must have a cause." (S15.5)

In fleshing out the third statement, the one that asserts our general ignorance of things, Butler writes that it "is indeed in general no more than effects that the most knowing are acquainted with: for as to causes, they are as entirely in the dark as the most ignorant." (FS.15.5) Might it not be that this vast ignorance is necessary in the moral economy, the system required to test us as moral beings it this probationary world?[58]

In Sermon 15, paragraphs 6, 7, and 8 pile on additional considerations all intended to make the reader feel the depth and scope of human ignorance, and to feel incapacitated from judging much at all about anything. What we do have, he insists, is enough understanding to live out the life of piety and virtue. Part of the living of that life is, of course, redemption by Christ.

[58] This argument is presented in a different form in David White, "The Problem of Evil." *Second Order*, 1975.

“The Almighty may cast clouds and darkness round about him, for reasons and purposes of which we have not the least glimpse or conception.” (FS.15.8)

Butler rounds out the section with a striking illustration, one of many that clarify by analogy what it is to be in a state of discipline and improvement. Why, he asks has nature not furnished us with wings? Because he answers, we were designed to inhabit the land and not the air. (FS.15.10) “If to acquire knowledge were our proper end, we should indeed be but poorly provided: but if somewhat else be our business and duty; we may, notwithstanding our ignorance, be well enough furnished for it; and the observation of our ignorance may be of assistance to us in the discharge of it.” (FS.15.10)

The second half of FS.15 is the consequences that are alleged to follow from the exposition of the text, which is the scriptural teaching on pervasive human ignorance. Butler wants to show that much as the ignorance may appear an obstacle to living the life of ethics and piety, it can also be beneficial and can help people to move in the direction of ethics and piety.

The benefits with regard to morals and piety of understanding the vast scope of human ignorance are (1) lowered expectations of knowledge and less frustration over not having knowledge, (2) an answer to objections against religion, especially those based on the appearances of evil, (3) concentrating on what is our true business in this world, ignoring the secret economy beyond us, (4) show a decent respect for the infinite and all that is beyond. All these consequences tie in directly to the cumulative case for the whole life of ethics and religion, to which Butler refers throughout his work, and (5) not knowing the heart of our neighbor, hence not judging the person because of the deed. In Butler’s own words:

> “Religion consists in submission and resignation to the divine will. Our condition in this world is a school of exercise for this temper: and our ignorance, the shallowness of our reason, the temptations, difficulties, afflictions, which we are exposed to; all equally contribute to make it so. The general observation may be carried on; and whoever will attend to the thing will plainly see, that less sensible evidence, with less difficulty in practice, is the same, as more sensible evidence, with greater difficulty in practice. Therefore, difficulties in speculation as much come into the notion of a state of discipline, as difficulties in practice: and so, the same reason or account is to be given of both. Thus, though it is indeed absurd to talk of the greater merit of assent, upon little or no evidence, than upon demonstration; yet the strict discharge of our duty, with less sensible evidence does imply in it a better character, than the same diligence in the discharge of it upon more sensible evidence. This fully accounts for and explains that assertion of our Saviour, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" [John xx. 29.] have become Christians and obeyed the gospel, upon less sensible evidence, than that which Thomas, to whom he is speaking, insisted upon.” (FS.15.9)

This review of Butler's 15th sermon is intended to show that he is not working primarily in the skeptical tradition associated with fideism. Rather, he is working in the tradition of forensic apologetics in a way satisfying to the objector.

Butler's strategy is to use analysis to show that the so-called objections to Christianity are more excuses for what one finds pleasing in the moment without consideration of long-term self-interest than they are significance evidence against religion. It does no good, of course, to say this, it is necessary to show the failure of the negative case.

Literally, "forensic" means having to do with the courts. What does that mean? A forensic process terminates in a decision to act or not act. Depending on the standard of proof required, less than an even chance may still be actionable. Thus, the fire marshal may require that when the alarm sounds all employees leave the building, and the fire marshal may require evacuation even if there is very little chance that there is a fire. The alarm may be a planned drill or show every sign of being a false alarm. Butler does not rely on everyone agreeing with his example. The analogical method only requires that whatever standard the opponents use regarding other practices they also use it regarding the practice of ethics and religion.

Secondly, and similarly, forensic philosophy may adopt any number of premises if these premises are stipulated to by the opponent at hand.

Finally, the whole argument, which may be called the painting of a picture, the advocate tries to move from the accepted premises step by step to the determined, practical, conclusion, and the action grounded on that conclusion. In order to move step by step, the advocate must state, or otherwise display, the step itself and make explicit, or be prepared to make explicit, the justification for the step. The justification for moving from one step to the next must always be accepted by everyone one who hopes to persuade. Obviously, this is an ideal rarely attained since, for example, people often disagreed regarding the credibility of a witness.

Summation

Butler was aware of the atrocities committed in the name of God. He saw this as a distortion of religion. Regarding culture and ideology, he may have had less awareness. The concept of culture in the anthropological sense was not developed in his day. But he knew that certain groups were taught to hate other groups and that warfare in his day justified atrocities.

III. Seeming Defects in Human Nature

The seeming defects in human nature and in the whole natural world, become problematic when the concept of humanity is not well-ordered, not well-governed. (See Sermon 4, on "The Government of the Tongue" for an extended example.) To assimilate Butler's (and our own) concerns with the philosophical tradition since antiquity, we can concentrate on philosophical study that divides into ethics, politics, and divinity. In this scheme ethics concerns the rule of life regarding the self, politics takes up the rule of peoples as they are formed into society, and divinity has as its object not so much knowledge of God, which Butler admits we do not have, but what we are able to discover regarding the origin and original intent of the world, the course and constitution of nature seen as under the reign of a supreme governor, and what we are to anticipate regarding the final disposition of things.

This last is traditionally called "eschatology" or the study of end times. In all these investigations Butler relies on experience rather than speculation. There are vast areas of concern that are beyond our experience, so the preferred form of argument is analogical. That is, we infer the future (or any unknown) will be the same as the past or present that is within our experience. Experience may be by our senses or by the testimony of others. Both, of course, are fallible, and both can be used by an agent with intent to deceive. To give testimony with the intent to deceive is to lie. Creating a false appearance may be innocent (use of cosmetics for example) or may be seriously criminal (such as when the data in an experiment is faked).

Living as a human being is a challenge, which Butler calls a test, trial, or probation. The test is not entirely fair, but neither is it maliciously unfair. It is what it is. What Butler is most determined to impress on his readers is that ethics, politics, and divinity are all practical matters, they concern practice, how we act, more than speculation or how we think.

The solution to the embarrassing appearances proposed here is that all aspects of human nature are ordered according to the will of God, or at least according to nature. The will of God created the world and established the system of passions and principles that makes up human nature. Because of these passions, we are attracted to many and various objects, to the good of others (empathy), to the natural world (our environment), to our own happiness (in the sense of well-being), and to God.

Butler's primary thesis is that our moral obligations and our desire for satisfaction for ourselves and others are well coordinated in this world and will be perfectly coincident in the future state. Some people accept some version of this scheme and some do not.

This book is concerned with those who reject or lack confidence in the scheme for cause. That is, those who have proposed a seemingly plausible objection. Since Butler is more concerned with practice than with belief, he takes it as obvious that living in a way that violates virtue or piety is harmful to ourselves and to others. So, one does what one can to convince and convert those who have wandered to get back on the path.

Thus, Butler understood philosophy as a way of life. Skeptics can, of course, deny the existence of God, the vast system of final causes, and the importance of seeing that self-love and benevolence are not necessarily in competition. No one, however, can deny the passions, the satisfaction that results when they attain their objects, and the misery that results when they are denied. The demands of the passions and the necessity of governing them properly (in the service of self-love) cannot be denied regardless of what else one may affirm, deny, or doubt.

Butler worked as a pastoral philosopher. That is, he begins not with academic disputes but with the excuses ordinary people make for not wholeheartedly following the path of virtue and piety. He found ample evidence in the world around him that many had fallen from the way of virtue and piety. The conversation then continues in the established philosophical manner.

There were plenty of examples of this approach to the search for truth in Butler's time. Hume provided the supreme example in his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion,* which could be improved only by the addition of John Wesley to Clarke, Butler, and Hume, who appear in the *Dialogues* as Demea, Cleanthes, and Philo, respectively.[59]

When the civic body is pious and virtuous the citizens naturally work together for mutual advantage, so there is a great deal at stake in making the effort to live in accord with virtue and piety. The natural world is fully adapted to the moral economy advocated here. God created the world in love, and God is the natural object of supreme love. We and our neighbors are in the natural world, and we are all self-loving and other-loving beings.

With or without help from Bishop Butler, people have adopted the way of life of following the path of virtue and piety, with varying degrees of success, of course. Those who have the commitment will be shepherded by shame and guilt under the supervision of conscience.

There is also a large group who are outside the system, apparently lacking conscience altogether or subverting it.

[59] Kemp Smith (1947).

6 Self-deception and Hypocrisy

To live the life of virtue and piety one must contain and control self-deception, hypocrisy, and the pursuit of pleasure. Self-love and benevolence must be brought into accord. This is the discipline of life. Self-deception and hypocrisy are inherently opposed to the life of piety, but they are not inherent to human nature. Butler provides specific examples of how this can be done. *Butler rejects the stoic rejection of pleasure. Pleasure need not be eliminated, but does need to be organized, managed, and governed primarily by self-love, benevolence, and conscience. Thus, human nature can be ruined by pleasure seeking, but possesses the means to set things right.* [60]

> As God almighty foresaw the irregularities and disorders, both natural and moral, which would happen in this state of things, he hath graciously made some provision against them, by giving us several passions and affections, which arise from, or whose objects are, those disorders. Of this sort are fear, resentment, compassion, and others; of which there could be no occasion or use in a perfect state: but in the present we should be exposed to greater inconveniences without them; though there are very considerable ones, which they themselves are the occasions of. They are incumbrances indeed, but such as we are obliged to carry about with us, through this various journey of life: some of them as a guard against the violent assaults of others; and in our own defence; some, in behalf of others; and all of them to put us upon, and help to carry us through a course of behaviour suitable to our condition, in default of that perfection of wisdom and virtue, which would be in all respects our better security. (FS.9.1)

Self-Deception

In direct opposition to the Delphic injunction[61], self-deceptive practices function to interfere with the self-knowledge and self-understanding required for the moral economy to function. The apologetic task before us is to show that the human capacity for self-deception, while certainly a disability, is not disabling enough to prevent adoption of virtue and piety as a way of life. We would also like to show that the human capacity for self-deception is not enough to disprove God's existence.

Butler presents his material on self-deception in relation to two stories from the Hebrew Scriptures. As always, he uses the King James translation, but what is unusual here is that nowhere else in his published work does he rely on anecdotal narratives from scripture.
In sermon VII, "Upon the Character of Balaam," Butler begins his assault on "religious self-deceit." Butler finds it "most astonishment" that the wicked, who know their wickedness, and

[60] Bernard (1900) has a long editorial note on FS.5.3 and the Stoic *apatheia* (ἀπάθεια). The discussion continues in Munroe (2019) and in Liu (2019).
[61]Butler quotes the precept, *Know Thyself*, at sermon10.2.

know what the path of virtue and piety requires, nevertheless persist in their wicked ways and yet continue to expect to "die the death of the righteous."

After a few remarks on the reading, Butler presents the Balaam narrative, which need not detain us since his main point is that the character type that hopes to escape the consequences of wicked acts knows perfectly well that things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be. Why would anyone desire to be deceived, much less self-deceived?

Obviously, the only solution to the character defect of self-deception is to apply commonsense reason to the rationally inexplicable but widespread tendency to believe or pretend to believe that one can avoid the inevitable and anticipated consequence of vice. Those who adjust their actions to be in accord with what they have already accepted—that we see intuitively at first view what is our duty, and that vice cannot lead to happiness but must bring misery—can recover out to the limits of human nature.

The solution proposed here is not crassly humanistic because according to Butler when reason assumes its place in the direction of character we are "actually under the influence of the divine authority."

So we see that human nature even with a strong tendency toward self-deception is absolved of being wicked, and we have demonstrated that those who overcome self-deception have thereby passed a level of their moral and intellectual probation bringing them all the closer to God.

Sermon X takes up the well-known story of Nathan, David, and Bathsheba. By arranging for the death of his mistress's husband, King David is acting in a manner contrary to what is required and expected of a righteous king, rather as Butler's complaint against Balaam was that by considering taking a bribe he was deviating from the duties of his station as a prophet. Butler presents Balaam and David as extraordinary cases of self-deception, meaning by self-deception the human ability to "close the eyes of the mind" and ignore an extreme shortcoming in one's self. This blindness to one's faults is possible only if some deep source of delusion darkens the light (conscience=the candle of the Lord) and corrupts the conscience. Nietzsche's quip is in the spirit of Butler's sermons: "I did that," says my memory. "I could not have done that," says my pride, and remains inexorable. Eventually—the memory yields.[62]

Butler has insisted throughout that the whole universe is a moral economy and that we have been supplied with the faculties needed to conduct ourselves properly and to succeed at the various trials and test we are confronted with in this probationary existence.

In FS.7.16 Butler having acknowledged that self-deception and hypocrisy may seem to give satisfaction presents a sketch of the phenomenology of free choice:

[62] *Beyond Good and Evil* IV.68. An excellent but still unpublished commentary on Butler on self-deception is Aaron Garrett, "Bishop Butler on Bullshit," University of Western Ontario, November2011.

> As we are reasonable creatures, and have any regard to ourselves, we ought to lay these things plainly and honestly before our mind, and upon this, act as you please, as you think most fit: make that choice, and prefer that course of life, which you can justify to yourselves, and which sits most easy upon your own mind.

Butler, of course, thinks that those who carry out the suggested exercise will soon conclude that a life of vice cannot become a life of happiness, but must be one of misery for any being, like humans who are moral (accountable) agents.

Many people are not innocent; they are guilty and to some extent are aware of their guilt. Thus, as accountable beings they had at some point chosen vice over virtue, along a sliding scale. Looking back, Butler maintains, they would all choose the state of innocence if that were possible.

Butler's analysis is that the preference for innocence derives both from the workings of our conscience and the fear of a final judgment. Satisfaction and eventual happiness for ourselves and others comes from actual attainment of the objects of desire. Self-deception can never be of help in attaining the objects of desire. As Butler writes in one of his most famous lines:

> Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be: why, then, should we desire to be deceived? (FS 7.16)

As a pastor Butler states that the melancholiest aspect of morality, virtue and religion is the surprising and unaccountable.

Butler maintains we are up against two destructive tendencies. One is the notorious partiality in favor of ourselves and the other is our potentially lethal inability to know what is in our best interest. This failure to achieve self-knowledge is often the outcome of the psychology of self-deception, which Butler describes in convincing detail. (FS 10)

> There is plainly, in the generality of mankind, an absence of doubt or distrust, in a very great measure, as to their moral character and behaviour; and likewise a disposition to take for granted, that all is right and well with them in these respects. The former is owing to their not reflecting, not exercising their judgment upon themselves; the latter, to self-love. I am not speaking of that extravagance, which is sometimes to be met with; instances of persons declaring in words at length, that they never were in the wrong, nor had ever any diffidence of the justness of their conduct, in their whole lives. No, these people are too far gone to have any thing said to them. The thing before us is indeed of this kind, but in a lower degree, and confined to the moral character; somewhat of which we almost all of us have, without reflecting upon it. Now consider, how long and how grossly, a person of the best understanding might be imposed upon by one of whom he had not any suspicion, and in whom he placed an entire confidence; especially if there

> were friendship and real kindness in the case: surely this holds even stronger with respect to that self we are all so fond of. Hence arises in men a disregard of reproof and instruction, rules of conduct and moral discipline, which occasionally come in their way: a disregard, I say, of these; not in every respect, but in this single one, namely, as what may be of service to them in particular towards mending their own hearts and tempers, and making them better men. It never in earnest comes into their thoughts, whether such admonitions may not relate, and be of service to themselves, and this quite distinct from a positive persuasion to the contrary, a persuasion from reflection that they are innocent and blameless in those respects. Thus we may invert the observation which is somewhere made upon Brutus, that he never read, but in order to make himself a better man.[63] It scarce comes into the thoughts of the generality of mankind, that this use is to be made of moral reflections which they meet with; that this use, I say, is to be made of them by themselves, for every body observes and wonders that it is not done by others. (FS.10.2)

Since the turn of the twentieth century Butler has more often been considered a moral psychologist than a religious and ethical philosopher who earned his living by holding various positions in the church. The following paragraph contains his self-characterization, at least as far as self-deception is concerned. Butler is serious about getting his theory right and giving a correct account of this aspect of human nature, but he is willing to be corrected and matters of theory. What concerns him most both as a cleric and as one who lives in the community is how people live, how well they live, and what he or anyone can do by way of correction:

> Some acts of wickedness are definable and others not. With regard to the later, wickedness that is not fixed and determinate. "It is to be observed then, that as there are express determinate acts of wickedness, such as murder, adultery, theft: so, on the other hand, there are numberless cases in which the vice and wickedness cannot be exactly defined; but consists in a certain general temper and course of action, or in, the neglect of some duty, suppose charity or any other, whose bounds and degrees are not fixed. This is the very province of self-deceit and self-partiality: here it governs without check or control. "For what commandment is there broken? Is there a transgression where there is no law? a vice which cannot be defined?" (FS 10.9)
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> [FS 10.11] … It is not uncommon for persons, who run out their fortunes, entirely to neglect looking into the state of their affairs, and this from a general knowledge, that the condition of them is bad. These extravagant people are perpetually ruined

[63] Annotators have so far been unsuccessful in identifying Butler's source for this quotation.

> before they themselves expected it: and they tell you for an excuse, and tell you truly, that they did not think they were so much in debt, or that their expenses so far exceeded their income. And yet no one will take this for an excuse, who is sensible that their ignorance of their particular circumstances was owing to their general knowledge of them; that is, their general knowledge, that matters were not well with them, prevented their looking into particulars. There is somewhat of the like kind with this in respect to morals, virtue, and religion. Men find that the survey of themselves, their own heart and temper, their own life and behaviour, doth not afford them satisfaction: things are not as they should be: therefore they turn away, will not go over particulars, or look deeper, lest they should find more amiss. For who would choose to be put out of humour with himself? No one, surely, if it were not in order to mend, and to be more thoroughly and better pleased with himself for the future.

Butler continues with his analysis, saying wise things about the powers of self-deception, but he has still not provided an explanation why there would be such a thing as self-deception in a God-governed world. Butler then has practical suggestions for those who are serious about getting out from under the oppression of self-deception:

> [FS 10.13] The first is, that those who have never had any suspicion of, who have never made allowances for, this weakness in themselves, who have never (if I may be allowed such a manner of speaking) caught themselves in it, may almost take for granted that they have been very much misled by it.
> [FS 10.14] Secondly, There is one easy and almost sure way to avoid being misled by this self-partiality, and to get acquainted with our real character: to have regard to the suspicious part of it, and keep a steady eye over ourselves in that respect.
> [FS 10..15] Thirdly, It would very much prevent our being misled by this self-partiality, to reduce that practical rule of our saviour, Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do unto them, to our judgment and way of thinking. This rule, you see, consists of two parts. One is, to substitute another for yourself, when you take a survey of any part of your behaviour, or consider what is proper and fit and reasonable for you to do upon any occasion: the other part is, that you substitute yourself in the room of another; consider yourself as the person affected by such a behaviour, or towards whom such an action is done: and then you would not only see, but likewise feel, the reasonableness or unreasonableness of such an action or behaviour. But, alas! the rule itself may be dishonestly applied: there are persons who have not impartiality enough with respect to themselves, nor regard enough for others, to be able to make a just application of it. This just application, if men would honestly make it, is in effect all that I have been recommending; is the whole thing, the direct contrary to that inward dishonesty as respecting our

> intercourse with our fellow creatures. And even the bearing this rule in their thoughts may be of some service; the attempt thus to apply it, is an attempt towards being fair and impartial, and may chance unawares to show them to themselves, to show them the truth of the case they are considering.

Butler concludes his treatment of self-deception without a full and adequate explanation but leaving us convinced that fighting and defeating self-deception is an important, even essential, aspect of our moral trial in this life.

> Upon the whole it is manifest, that there is such a thing as this self-partiality and self-deceit: that in some persons it is to a degree which would be thought incredible, were not the instances before our eyes; …And all that I have further to add upon this subject is, that either there is a difference between right and wrong, or there is not: religion is true, or it is not. If it be not, there is no reason for any concern about it: but if it be true, it requires real fairness of mind and honesty of heart. And, if people will be wicked, they had better of the two be so from the common vicious passions without such refinements, than from this deep and calm source of delusion; which undermines the whole principle of good: darkens that light, that *candle of the Lord within,* which is to direct our steps; and corrupts conscience, which is the guide of life. (FS 10.16)

Hypocrisy

Butler's main treatment of hypocrisy is in his sermon on the martyrdom of King Charles I, delivered before the House of Lords, in Westminster Abbey, 30 January, 1740-41.[64] Butler's foundational argument is somewhat odd. Butler sets out a common sense view of virtue and vice in society, makes the point that having a government to enforce civil laws is highly beneficial to society, and finally claims that those who do not follow the path of virtue and piety must at least act as hypocrites, pretending to be virtuous. There is nothing good about hypocrisy, but it does serve to maintain the rule of virtue; it has a place in the moral economy:

> [SS 1740.7] The fundamental laws of all governments are virtuous ones, prohibiting treachery, injustice, cruelty: and the law of reputation enforces those civil laws, by rendering these vices everywhere infamous, and the contrary virtues honourable and of good report. Thus far the constitution of society is visibly moral: and hence it is, that men cannot live in it without taking care to cover those vices when they have them, and make some profession of the opposite virtues, fidelity, justice, kind regard to others, when they have them not: but especially is this

[64] One of the Six Public Sermons.

> necessary in order to disguise and colour over indirect purposes, which require the concurrence of several persons.

Butler then proposes an important qualification.

> [8] Now all false pretences of this kind are to be called hypocritical, as being contrary to simplicity; and always meant to leave a wrong impression, tho' not always a false belief. For it is to be observed, that they are often made without any formal intention to have them believed, or to have it thought that there is any reality under these pretences. Many examples occur of verbal professions of fidelity, justice, publick regards, in cases where there could be no imagination of their being believed. And what other account can be given of these merely verbal professions, but that they were thought the proper language for the ear; and made in business for the very same kind of reasons as civility is kept up in conversation?

Butler then makes a further distinction between the hypocrisy that is a species of self-deception and that which is only deceptive of others.

> [14] In the history which this day refers us to, we find our constitution, in church and state, destroyed under pretences, not only of religion, but of securing liberty, and carrying it to a greater height. The destruction of the former was with zeal of such a kind, as would not have been warrantable, though it had been employed in the destruction of heathenism. And the confusions, the persecuting spirit, and incredible fanaticism,[65] which grew up upon its ruins, cannot but teach sober-minded men to reverence so mild and reasonable an establishment, now it is restored; for the preservation of Christianity, and keeping up a sense of it amongst us, and for the instruction and guide of the ignorant; nay were it only for guarding religion from such extravagances: especially as these important purposes are served by it without being hard in the least upon any.

Nevertheless, Butler's analysis of hypocrisy remains superficial and of little use for philosophy. One commentator (Dover, 2019) is broad, deep and substantive, and as such useful for the criticism of hypocrisy in ethics and politics. Near the end of his life Butler had the opportunity to demonstrate in practice his abhorrence of **hypocrisy**. When Butler was translated to Durham the Bishopric came with extraordinary powers and functioned as a semi-autonomous state if the bishop remained loyal to the English king and protected the border with Scotland. At the time of his appointment Butler was asked to give up the temporal powers associated with that office, but he declined on grounds of the law against simony and became prince bishop anyway.

[65] Fanaticism is, of course, a form of evil, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Unconscious Hypocrisy

But when any one is thus deluded through his own; fault, in whatever way or degree it is, he deludes himself. And this is as properly hypocrisy towards himself, as deluding the world is hypocrisy towards the world: and he who is guilty of it acts as if lie could deceive and mock God; and therefore is an hypocrite towards him, in as strict and literal a sense as the nature of the subject will admit. (SS 1740 note 1)

Butler's treatment of self-deception (David, Balaam) and hypocrisy (Jesus on the Pharisees and Sadducees) is biblical, and from the psychological point of view his explanation of the appeal of self-deception and hypocrisy he has made an early but significant contribution to the study of human nature. Butler's long note on hypocrisy begins:

> The hypocrisy laid to the charge of the Pharisees and Sadducees, in Matthew xvi. at the beginning, and in Luke xii. 54, is determinately this, that their vicious passions blinded them so as to prevent their discerning the evidence of our saviour's mission; though no more understanding was necessary to discern it, than what they had, and made use of in common matters. Here they are called hypocrites merely upon account of their insincerity towards God and their own consciences, and not at all upon account of any insincerity towards men. This last indeed is included in that general hypocrisy, which, throughout the gospels, is represented as their distinguished character; but the former is as much included. For they were not men, who, without any belief at all of religion, put on the appearance of it only in order to deceive the world: on the contrary, they believed their religion, and were zealous in it. But their religion, which they believed, and were zealous in, was in its nature hypocritical: for it was the form, not the reality; it allowed them in immoral practices; and indeed was itself in some respects immoral, as they indulged their pride and uncharitableness under the notion of zeal for it. (SS 1740 note 1)

Butler then concludes this long note by making clear the point of it all:

> And the ground of this whole manner of considering things; for it is not to be spoken of as only a peculiar kind of phraseology, but is a most accurate and strictly just manner of considering characters and moral conduct; the ground of it I say, is, that when persons will not be influenced by such evidence in religion as they act upon in the daily course of life, or when their notions of religion (and I might add of virtue) are in any sort reconcilable with what is vicious, 'tis some faulty negligence or prejudice which thus deludes them; in very different ways, perhaps, and very different degrees. But when any one is thus deluded through his own; fault, in whatever way or degree it is, he deludes himself. And this is as properly hypocrisy

> towards himself, as deluding the world is hypocrisy towards the world: and he who is guilty of it acts as if lie could deceive and mock God; and therefore is an hypocrite towards him, in as strict and literal a sense as the nature of the subject will admit.

Christina Starmans has made an empirical case for what is Butler's position, attributing the view to Kant instead of Butler. Butler, like Kant, would have acknowledged the goodness of a good action regardless of the motivation, but for an act to be an act of virtue it must spring from character.

> There are two strands of moral philosophy that, loosely speaking, make opposite predictions about which kinds of actions will be seen as most moral. One argument, associated with Aristotle, is that a truly moral person will wholeheartedly want to do the right thing, and no part of her will be tempted to act immorally. Another argument, associated with Immanuel Kant, is that an action is truly moral only if it is *not* something you want to do – otherwise, a person is just acting on her own desires, and although the result might be positive, it should not be considered especially moral. These philosophers are arguing about which actions we *should* see as most moral. But which of these views best captures how ordinary people actually *do* reason about morality?
>
> To answer the question and uncover how people reason about overcoming temptation across a lifespan, my team recruited more than 250 children, aged three to eight years, and nearly 400 adults. Each participant was asked to consider several child-friendly scenarios depicting two characters who both acted morally. One story, for example, described two children who had each broken something of their mother's. Both ultimately told their mother the truth about what they had done. And both children *wanted* to tell the truth and wanted to do the right thing. But one child was also tempted to lie to avoid punishment yet told the truth even though she found it difficult. The other child found it easy to tell the truth, and wasn't tempted to lie, because she wasn't concerned about the punishment. We then asked which of the two truth-tellers was more morally praiseworthy.[66]

The experimenter concludes:

> Finally, and intriguingly, it might be that children inherently prefer people with a unified self. As we grow older, though, we come to appreciate the nuances of a more complex character that allows for both temptation and the willpower to overcome it. [Thus, making a virtue out of necessity.]

[66] https://aeon.co/ideas/is-it-better-to-beat-temptation-or-never-feel-tempted-at-all

Summation

We have discussed the evidence for the existence of God and moral obligations that go with being human, but our main theme has been to acknowledge that much of human nature does not initially appear to be the work of a divine creativity. Aspects of human nature and in particular the tendency of self-deception and hypocrisy to overcome the function of conscience challenge the world view of the theist who sees the world as it is and as ruled by God. We have insisted in accord with Butler's original intent that the main project here is not to provide arguments for or against the existence of God or of any doctrine of religion but rather to free people from the various misapprehensions that prevent them from living the life of virtue and piety. So, our question becomes how to overcome self-deception and hypocrisy, and that requires some understanding of why we are faced with some such temptations in the first place. The answer proposed by Butler is:

- One becomes good, in part, by one's actions performed by free will.
- Actions are motivated by seeking to gain rewards and avoid punishments.
- Rewards and punishments given by nature must be earned by following nature and resisting temptation.
- It is in our long-term self-interest to be virtuous since it at least affords us some benefit in this life and benefit, if there is one, in the next life.
- Temptations are not from God but have developed over time since they seem to work yet cannot stand up to critical scrutiny.

7 Distributive Injustice

The proof of a teleological constitution to the world is manifest from experience. (AR 1.3.1). It is obvious that there is some government over the world and that that government is analogous to the rule of a master over a servant or of the civil magistrate over the subjects. Such rule may appear random, but only when considered in part. Taken as a whole, the appearance of a "dispensation" is obvious, but the existence of a deity who governs the world is, of course, a further inference. Basically, the world makes sense.

Our concern, as always, is to draw attention to those observations Butler makes that tend to deprive readers of the tendency not to pursue the path of virtue and piety. For as long as people have contemplated these matters they, many of them, have tended to believe (1) that religion is opposed to the life of pleasure and the satisfaction of desire and (2) that the pleasure principle we see embodied in the constitution of the world can deliver the best results by adopting a way of life other than that of virtue and piety. Butler argues to the contrary and contrary to popular opinion that virtue and piety can deliver what we want most, the full satisfaction of our nature. Butler was born into a dissenting household. He was shy and his manner appeared old-fashioned, but he would have nothing of the dogmatism and authoritarianism associated with the Puritans. He insisted on the authority of the individual conscience as the locus of moral responsibility. The only pleasure he rejected was pleasure the pursuit of which or over-indulgence in interfered with the attainment of happiness. For Butler there is no pursuit of pleasure as such but only of objects expected to give pleasure. The trouble with pleasure is not that it feels good but that we so often miscalculate and end up with a balance of displeasure if not pain, or by seeking the easy pleasures we lose the opportunity to enjoy the more refined joys.

Butler is explicit about his commitment to the empirical method, and nowhere are the methodological implications more significant than in dealing with the system of the passions. (Pref.13)

Butler understands virtue to consist in following human nature, and vice in deviating from it. He acknowledges the burden is on him to prove this proposition, but to prove the relationship between virtue and human nature, we must present a specific, detailed, and evidence-based view of human nature. Nor is all this merely an academic exercise since our main intent is to make the case for the practice of virtue and piety over the course of one's life. Butler refers to "the ancient moralists," usually understood as primarily a reference to Aristotle, and stresses the importance of expending the effort to clear up this whole matter of how nature and virtue are related. The solution proposed need not be intellectually conclusive, but the conclusion we reach much be sufficiently probable to be actionable. Butler places himself in the tradition of those who have written treatises on the passions, and acknowledges the inadequacy of previous investigations, and his own. In looking at Butler's explication we need to consider not only the sources and background of Butler's work, but also the changes in context over the past 300 years and the prospects for future developments. (Pref. 13)

> A late author of great and deserved reputation says, that to place virtue in following nature, is at best a loose way of talk. And he has reason to say this, if what I think he intends to express, though with great decency, be true that scarce any other sense can be put upon those words, but acting as any of the several parts, without distinction, of a man's nature happen most to incline him.

Butler works chiefly in this latter method, by appeal to matter of fact. J. H. Bernard has an extended note listing those passages in which Butler appeals to abstract relations. The ancient moralists include of course the Stoics, and the claim that virtue consists in following nature is well known. See T. H. Irwin, "Stoic Naturalism and Its Critics" and A. A. Long, "Stoicism in the Philosophical Tradition," both in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics,* for scholarship that goes well beyond what was available previously. Irwin has a fuller treatment of Butler in Miller and Inwood, which reprints Long's treatment of Butler. Butler's main source is Cicero, see *De Officiis,* III.v. For details on the many treatises upon the passions, see Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions.* The late author of great and deserved reputation is William Wollaston, one of the great British moralists from the generation before Samuel Clarke, who died in 1724, the year the edition Butler cites was published. Like Clarke and Butler, he was a favorite of Queen Caroline. Benjamin Franklin mentions working on "the second edition" of Wollaston, but this would have to be the edition of 1725. The first edition (1722) was not authorized, and thus encouraged Wollaston to bring out the "second edition," but the first that he printed. Butler's wording here is almost a parody of Wollaston:

> They who place all in *following nature,* if they mean by that phrase acting according to the natures of things (*that is,* treating things as being what they in nature are, or according to truth) say what is right. But this does not seem to be their meaning. And if it is only that a man must follow his own nature, since his nature is not purely rational, but there is a part of him, which he has in common with brutes, they appoint him a guide which I fear will mislead him, this being commonly more likely to prevail, than the rational part. At best this talk is loose. (*Religion of Nature Deliniated)*

The parallel passage in Butler is:

> The sum of the whole is plainly this. The nature of man, considered in his single capacity, and with respect only to the present world, is adapted and leads him to attain the greatest happiness he can for himself in the present world. The nature of man considered in publick or social capacity leads him to a right behavior in society, to that course of life which we call virtue. Men follow or obey their nature in both these capacities and respects to a certain degree, but not intirely: their actions do not come up to the whole of what their nature leads them to in either of

> these capacities or respects; and they often violate their nature in both. *i.e.* as they neglect the duties they owe to their fellow-creatures, to which their nature leads them; and are injurious, to which their nature is abhorrent: so there is a manifest negligence in men of their real happiness or interest in the present world, when that interest is inconsistent with a present gratification; for the sake of which they negligently, nay, even knowingly are the authors and instruments of their own misery and ruin. Thus they are as often unjust to themselves as to others, and for the most part are equally so to both by the same actions. (FS.1.15)

We can know or understand our nature to a greater or lesser extent, but we can do nothing to change that nature:

> As we cannot remove from this earth, or change our general business on it; so neither can we alter our real nature. Therefore, no exercise of the mind can be recommended, but only the exercise of those faculties you are conscious of. (FS.13.12)

Religion does not demand new affections, but only claims the direction of those you already have, those affections you daily feel; though unhappily confined to objects, not altogether unsuitable, but altogether unequal to them. We only represent to you the higher, the adequate objects of those very faculties and affections.

> Let the man of ambition go on still to consider disgrace as the greatest evil; honour as his chief good. But disgrace, in whose estimation? Honour, in whose judgment? This is the only question. If shame, and delight in esteem, be spoken of as real, as any settled ground of pain or pleasure, both these must be in proportion to the supposed wisdom and worth of him by whom we are contemned or esteemed.

Butler then wonders whether by accepting the love of God as a practice he might not be open to a charge of excessive and irrational enthusiasm:

> Must it then be thought enthusiastical to speak of a sensibility of this sort, which shall have respect to an unerring judgment, to infinite wisdom; when we are assured this unerring judgment, this infinite wisdom, does observe upon our actions?
>
> From the consideration of our being in a probation-state, of so much difficulty and. hazard, naturally arises the question, how we came to be placed in it? But such a general inquiry as this would be found involved in insuperable difficulties. For, though some of these difficulties would be lessened by observing, that all wickedness, is voluntary, as is implied in its very notion, and that many of the miseries of life have apparent good effects, yet when we consider other

> circumstances belonging to both, and what must be the consequence of the former in a life to come, it cannot but be acknowledged plain folly and presumption, to pretend to give an account of the whole reasons of this matter; the whole reasons of our being alloted a condition, out of which so much wickedness and misery, so circumstanced, would in fact arise. Whether it be not beyond our faculties, not only to find out, but even to understand, the whole account of this; or, though we should be supposed capable of understanding it, yet, whether it would be of service or prejudice to us to be informed of it, is impossible to say. (AR.1.5.1)

So far Butler is making the classic appeal to human ignorance as a disclaimer that he cannot be required how the love of God can be made consistent with our experience of life on earth. He next shifts the burden of presenting evidence to the opponent. It is enough to show, he says, that our present condition cannot be proved to be inconsistent with the perfect moral government of God. The mere possibility is enough to carry the case because what is at stake here is not certain knowledge of what is the case but rather how we are to live.

> But as our present condition can in no wise be shown inconsistent with the perfect moral government of God; so religion teaches us we are placed in it, that we might qualify ourselves, by the practice of virtue, for another state, which is to follow it.
>
> And this, though but a partial answer, a very partial one indeed, to the inquiry now mentioned, yet is a more satisfactory answer to another, which is of real, and of the utmost importance to us to have answered the inquiry, what is our business here? *The known end, then, why we are placed in a state of so much affliction, hazard and difficulty, is, our improvement in virtue and piety, as the requisite qualification for a future state of security and happiness.* [emphasis added]

Butler now gets specific and detailed about the way of life that he is defending and that he believes is supported by the evidence and argumentation he has presented so far:

> [10] And now to go on to the uses we should make of the foregoing reflections, the further ones they lead to, and the general temper they [tend to] beget in us. There being that distinct affection implanted in the nature of man, tending to lessen the miseries of life, that particular provision made for abating its sorrows, more than for increasing its positive happiness, as before explained; this may suggest to us what should be our general aim respecting ourselves, in our passage through this world: namely, to endeavour chiefly to escape misery, keep free from uneasiness, pain, and sorrow, or to get relief and mitigation of them; to propose to ourselves peace and tranquillity of mind, rather than pursue after high enjoyments. This is what the constitution of nature before explained marks out as the course we should

> follow, and the end we should aim at. To make pleasure and mirth and jollity our business, and be constantly hurrying about after some gay amusement, some new gratification of sense or appetite, to those who will consider the nature of man and our condition in this world, will appear the most romantic scheme of life that ever entered into thought. And yet how many are there who go on in this course, without learning better from the daily, the hourly disappointments, listlessness, and satiety which accompany this fashionable method of wasting away their days! (FS.6.10)

Butler's exposure of the paradox of hedonism is, of course, well known and unfortunately much misunderstood. The so-called paradox applies to truth seeking which Butler declares to be his business in life as well as to pleasure seeking. If we look at the pleasure-seeking passage alongside the injunction to seek truth and the general description of how to live, we see that Butler is trying to answer with the same form of argument the twin questions of "What should I do to seek truth?" and "What should I do to seek pleasure?" You may at some point stumble upon truth or pleasure without looking, that is not in question. The question is about times when you are seeking truth or seeking pleasure and the answer is that it is a conceptual error to seek truth or pleasure undetermined by an object. To seek truth, one must seek an object which is anticipated to be a source of truth, and to seek pleasure one must seek an object which is anticipated to be a source of pleasure. When you get truth or pleasure from the sought after object depends partly on the success of the search—whether you obtain the object—but also partly on whether the sought-after object is "antecedently suitable" to provide you with truth or pleasure.

> That all particular appetites and passions are towards external *things themselves,* distinct from the *pleasure arising from them,* is manifested from hence; that there could not be this pleasure, were it not for that prior suitableness between the object and the passion: there could be no enjoyment or delight from one thing more than another, from eating food more than from swallowing a stone, if there were not an affection or appetite to one thing more than another. (FS 11.6)

There are countless examples of Butler's point in refutation of hedonism.

> "I think," said she, "papa isn't particular about many things; but I think our not having the dinner quite punctual—quite ready for him when he comes in, fidgets him more than anything. You see, he has often had a long ride, and there is another long ride to come, and he has only half-an-hour—sometimes only a quarter—to eat his dinner in." *Wives and Daughters"* by Elizabeth Gaskell.

The doctor does not come home seeking pleasure. He comes home wanting his dinner on time. If the dinner is ready; he derives pleasure from that "external thing." If not, he is in distress.

> [10] I am not sensible, that I have, in this fifth observation, contradicted what any author designed to assert. But some of great and distinguished merit have, I think, expressed themselves in a manner, which may occasion some danger to careless readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice, in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it; than which mistakes, none can be conceived more terrible. [A typical Butlerian disclaimer.-DW] For it is certain, that some of the most shocking instances of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may have the contrary appearance. For this reflection might easily be carried on; but I forbear—the happiness of the world is the concern of him, who is the Lord and the proprietor of it: nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavor to promote the good of mankind in any ways but those which he has directed; that is indeed in all ways, not contrary to veracity and justice. I speak thus upon supposition of persons really endeavoring, in some sort, to do good without regard to these. But the truth seems to be, that such supposed endeavors proceed, almost always, from ambition, the spirit of party, or some indirect principle, concealed perhaps in great measure from persons themselves. And though it is our business and our duty to endeavor, within the bounds of veracity and justice, to contribute to the ease, convenience, and even cheerfulness and diversion of our fellow-creatures; yet, from our short views, it is greatly uncertain whether this endeavor will, in particular instances, produce an overbalance of happiness upon the whole; since so many and distant things must come into the account. And that which makes it our duty, is, that there is some appearance that it will, and no positive appearance sufficient to balance this, on the contrary side; and also, that such benevolent endeavor is a cultivation of that most excellent of all virtuous principles, the active principle of benevolence. (Diss 2.10)

This last passage is suggestive of Butler's rejection of utilitarianism and of his position on moral luck.

Rewards and Punishment

The revelations have the effect of grounding and perfecting the central thesis that virtue and piety coincide with the benefit of all, but it also gives rise to a persistent criticism of Butler's central thesis. The critics will argue that if virtue is rewarded, then the virtuous are acting out of self-interest and therefore not virtuous for the sake of goodness. They are prudent, perhaps,

which is a virtue, but however good they may be they are not good for the sake of goodness so much as for the sake of reward. This objection is derived from an overemphasis on Kant's view of morals. Our point is that, as Butler liked to say, a thing is what it is. A life of virtue and piety is just that regardless of the motivation. Nor can the appeal from the point of view of self-interest diminish the moral worth of an act—or of a life. This is not short-term self-interest where one gets an immediate material, social, or psychological reward, but long-term self-interest. We have a moral obligation to take care of ourselves, so expressions of self-love within the bounds of virtue and piety are necessarily within the bounds of morals. Nor is it practical to expect people to act contrary to self-interest for the purposes of a supposed morality or goodness of being.

On the Future Life

As mentioned previously, Butler did not think much of the difficulty regarding personal identity, so he relegated it to an appendix. Today the Dissertation of Personal Identity is one of the most attended to passages in the *Analogy*.

> "That personality is not a permanent, but a transient thing: that it lives and dies, begins and ends, continually: that no one can any more remain one and the same person two moments together, than two successive moments can be one and the same moment: that our substance is indeed continually changing; but whether this be so or not, is, it seems, nothing to the purpose; since it is not substance, but consciousness alone, which constitutes personality; which consciousness, being successive, cannot be the same in any two moments, nor consequently the personality constituted by it."
>
> And from hence it must follow, that is a fallacy upon ourselves, to charge our present selves with any thing we did, or to imagine our present selves interested in any thing which befell us yesterday, or that our present self will be interested in what will befall us tomorrow; since our present self is not, in reality, the same with the self of yesterday, but another like self or person coming in its room, and mistaken for it; to which another self will succeed tomorrow. This, I say, must follow: for if the self or person of today, and that of tomorrow, are not the same, but only like persons, the person of today is really no more interested in what will befall the person of tomorrow, than in what will befall any other person.
>
> It may be thought, perhaps, that this is not a just representation of the opinion we are speaking of; because those who maintain it allow, that a person is the same as far back as his remembrance reaches. And, indeed, they do use the words, *identity same*, person. Nor will language permit these words to be laid aside: since if they were, there must be, I know not what, ridiculous periphrasis substituted in the room of them.

> But they cannot, consistently with themselves, mean, that the person is really the same. For it is self-evident, that the personality cannot be really the same, if, as they expressly assert, that in which it consists is not the same.
>
> And as, consistently with themselves, they cannot, so, I think, it appears they do not, mean, that the person is *really* the same, but only that he is so in a fictitious sense: in such a sense only as they assert; for this they do assert, that any number of persons whatever may be the same person. The bare unfolding this notion, and laying it thus naked and open, seems the best confutation of it. However, since great stress is said to be put upon it, I add the following things:
>
> 1. This notion is contradictory to the conviction when we turn our thought upon ourselves.
> 2. Only a being, as opposed to an idea, abstraction, or quality, is capable of life, action, happiness, misery.
> 3. Every person is conscious of being the same person or self for as far back memory reaches.

Summation

Butler defines government, as an abstract concept, as (1) the appointment or annexing of pleasure or satisfaction to some actions and of pain or uneasiness to other, and (2) informs or gives notice of the appointment and that it will follow uniformly. Butler takes the example of drunkenness and its health consequences. For there to be government there must be a promulgation of the regulation to be obeyed and a punishment assigned for non-compliance. In matters of health and alcohol misuse nature is not uniform, but neither is it difficult to discern a patten of consequences. Good health is a pleasure, but illness is painful. A class of wine is delightful, falling down drunk in the gutter not so. Therefore, that nature is a government over us (the present dispensation) is literally true according to Butler's definition of the form of government.

8 Critique of Conscience, and the Passions

Self-love is not the simple pleasure principle. Self-love aims at the over-all well-being and flourishing of the person. As with our other topics, we are at first puzzled regarding how self-love fits in with the moral economy advanced by religion.

Butler is concerned with four issues regarding self-love, all familiar to most people.

- Do we know our own best interest?
- Does anyone else know our interest better than we do?
- How does self-love determine which passion to favor when passions conflict for attention?
- How does self-love deal with conflicts between self-regarding passions and benevolent passions?

Happiness

Butler defines happiness (satisfaction) as consisting in the enjoyment of those objects which are by nature suited to our several appetites and affections (FS 11.9), or as the sum total of the enjoyment of the objects of our desires (FS 11.15). From this definition it follows that all our enjoyments are "from God" since enjoyment results from the attainment of the objects of desire and the correspondence of the objects with our faculties is from God (FS 14.9).

Certainly, a more elaborate account can be given, and most likely a full account can be given in terms of biology. These points are of interest but are irrelevant to our investigation into the philosophical and theological considerations that might prove persuasive regarding adoption of the life of virtue and piety. The more we gather information about our common language as it applies to morals, and the more we are able to weave our contemporary expressions into the great historic received narrative, the more we are building a cumulative case for adoption of the life of virtue and piety as a matter of practice.

In Butler's system, just as the desires have their objects the attainment of which brings satisfaction, so the object of the higher principle of self-love is our personal happiness. We all wish for the happiness of some others, and some of us want all to be happy. Merely satisfying the desire of another does not necessarily contribute to that person's happiness. With children, obviously, but also with many adults, it may be a bad idea to give them whatever they want. The operative principle of benevolence aims at the true happiness of others. This happiness is found in the satisfaction of desire but is not found in the satisfaction of just any desire, but rather in the satisfaction of a judicious selection of desires. For example, one should not give an alcoholic beverage to an alcoholic. There are countless examples of people wanting things that are not good for them.

"Anyone who possesses the virtues is guaranteed a happy life." [67] Plato maintained an especially strong version of the main thesis we have attributed to Butler. Butler then developed his own system in the light of his reading of the ancients and scriptures.

Following Butler, we began with making it our business to seek the truth, especially the truth regarding the rule of life, which had always been the aim of philosophers concerned with philosophy as a way of life. We have followed Butler in the analysis of human nature and have now come to the question of conscience. Butler maintains that to follow conscience is to follow nature. If it is conscience that guides us in following the path of virtue and piety, then by following the path of virtue and piety we are following our nature and have found at last what we have been seeking from the start. What remains is the living of the life, and the continued answering of objections. From our point of view, we are not defending our opinion on any subject. We are passing on a message that was passed to us in trust and from which we have benefited. [68]

As an introduction to the following quotation one might say: "Passion" as used by Butler and just about everyone else involved in the discussion of moral philosophy has by now so far passed below the surface that we are left with a gap between what the whole tradition was talking about and the parallel modern discussion that favors "emotion" and "empathy" over "passion" in discussing the moral nature of humans.

> First, I will make the general observation that a study of the eighteenth-century ethical sermon is the best avenue to an understanding of what eighteenth-century moral philosophers could expect from their readers. It should also be observed that most eighteenth-century British moral philosophers were also preachers, *and* that—from the other direction—a number of significant early eighteenth-century preachers also published treatises in moral philosophy. Furthermore, the sermons of one eighteenth-century preacher found a significant place in the "canon" of works in moral philosophy, namely those of Bishop Butler. Butler's sermons, while more original and more subtle than those of his contemporaries, fit vary much into the tradition of early eighteenth-century ethical preaching. Especially relevant are sermons 5 and 6 on compassion, sermons 8 and 9 on resentment and forgiveness of injuries, and sermons 11 to 14 on the love of God and man. Sermons 1 to 3 on human nature also are very much concerned with the passions. All of Butler's extant sermons are concerned in one way or another, at least indirectly, with the passions. Philosophical commentators have generally ignored the fact that Butler's sermons are for the most part on themes and texts which were popular in eighteenth-century preaching. [69]

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[67] Attributed to Plato by Daniel Devereaux

[68] Sorabji (2014) has a section on Butler's view of conscience as it relates to the history.

[69] Alan Brinton, "The Passions as Subject Matter in Early Eighteenth-Century British Sermons.". *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* , Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 1992), p. 65.

Butler sets out his moral psychology as a hierarchic system. The highest ranked faculty, that which approves and disapproves of our actions, is the conscience. Conscience can be wrong, can be a player in the system of corruption and self-deception, and at times be indecisive, but the fact remains that conscience is that aspect of human nature best adapted to moral approbation and disapprobation as much as obviously eyes are for seeing and ears for hearing. Despite the high authority of conscience, it is still possible for the conscience to be usurped by any of the other passions and principles. What they lack in authority they make up in strength. So long as Butler is correct in this sketch of what constitutes human nature, then he seems justified as defining virtue in terms of corresponding to human nature as developed into custom.

Alternative Conscience

The Nazi Conscience **by** Claudia Koonz (2005) forces us to recognize there is an important distinction between a corrupt or erroneous or simply absent conscience and an alternative conscience. The Nazi conscience maintained a strict distinction between right and wrong, and insisted on a binding community ethic. History tells us that Nazi anti-Semitism was developed as part of a pseudo-scientific theory of the superiority of the Aryans over other groups. The Aryans were identified with the Germanic ethnicity. Hitler's propagandists worked hard stirring up hate for the Jews in particular. Despite basing this hatred on a pseudoscientific theory, they used old anti-Semitic tropes such as Luther's diatribe against the Jews. Hitler first targeted the severely disabled for exterminate--arguing that they are a strain on society. Those who worked in the pre-war euthanasia program came to see extermination of the unfit as a responsibility. Also, a sterilization program was also enacted based on the false science of eugenics. Hitler's rhetoric emphasized the virtue of the German people, the Volk. Unlike Christian based morality, which is based in theory on applying ethics to the whole of humanity regardless of their group affiliation, the Nazi's had one standard for the Volk and their close kin and another for the others, i.e., the Jews, the Roma, the Slavs, etc. What distinguishes the Nazi's ethics from other ethnocentric based ethics are the Nazi's virulence, the pseudoscientific basis for its racism, and basing it exclusively on ethnic heritage, which left little room for converts. It should be remembered that the Nazi were not in power long enough to raise a whole generation that had a true Nazi conscious exclusive of other influences. Those young people that were indoctrinated by the Nazis, as well as others, were de-Nazified by the allies. Most individuals had to adopt the Nazi Conscience as adults which means that they had to deny whatever ethics they were previously taught. As previously noted, there is an allure in identifying with one's group, whether the group is based on blood, culture, or religion, in a way that touts the group as being superior in a militant, chauvinistic way. Through no effort on one's part one can participate in the group's superiority.

Summation

The various passions (appetites and affections) determine what we desire, the things we want. Some of what we want are self-regarding objects, but we often and just as intensely want things for others. Benevolence most obviously extends to friends, family, and neighbors, but many of us feel empathic affection for complete strangers. Self-love, for Butler, aims are one's over-all well-being. For Butler it is the hierarchic organization of human nature that assures that all the passions are compatible with the master-principle of the convergence of duty and self-interest. The passions considered as a system determine what we expect will give us the most satisfactory pleasure, but then self-love determines what satisfactions will be for our well-being, benevolence which for the well-being of others, and finally conscience says what we approve or disapprove as moral agents subject to the ultimate consequences of our actions.[70]

It is obvious, or should be obvious, to all that the fundamental practical problem of human life is to attain the condition variously known as "happiness," the "good life," or the "perfection of human being." Essential to attaining this goal is to gain control over one's passions. In Butler's view, a view shared by many others, a life ruled by the passions, whichever passion happens to be strongest now, is the life of an animal. Analysis of human nature yields many theories of what it is to be human, but for any of these theories to make sense there must be the supposition of a superior principle in charge of and ruling the passions. The superior principle(s) determine which and to what degree the various affections and passions should be indulged or suppressed. Once again what seemed at first to be a moral chaos turns out to be a system which for all we can tell is perfectly adapted to the promotion of virtue, piety, and the greatest happiness for all. And, once again, we see that a rigorous self-analysis far from being the outcome of a philosophical course of study is an essential prerequisite for any such study. Russell, Popper, and Wittgenstein argued over whether it was proper to think of philosophy as so many problems to be solved. For us, semantic classification is the least of our concerns. Those who wish to take up philosophy had best first get clear that the aim of the study is a practical outcome, that we are in "hot pursuit" of happiness, and that we are in urgent need of a strategy we can pursue wholeheartedly, without reservation or compromise of intellectual integrity.

[70] Books with an extensive review of Butler on these topics include Dixon (2003) and Martin and Barresi (2000).

IV. Republication of Natural Religion

The moral economy is known through natural theology, but revelation is useful in developing the details of the whole system of virtue and piety, provided we can establish a text and get a good reading of that text. In line with our behavioristic leanings, we will not argue for (or against) a message said to be contained in a sacred text. Instead we will argue for an attitude of watchfulness and preparedness.

There are defects in scripture just as there are in nature, so our intent and our method remains the same: we want to show that what is grounds for rejection in scripture must also be considered good grounds for rejection in nature, which, of course it is not. Thus, near the end of the introduction to the *Analogy*, Butler writes:

> The design then of the following treatise will be to shew, that the several parts principally objected against in this moral and Christian dispensation, including its scheme, its publication, and the proof which God has afforded us of its truth; that the particular parts principally objected against in this whole dispensation, are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of nature, or providence; that the chief objections themselves which are alleged against the former, are no other, than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, where they are found in fact to be inconclusive; and that this argument from analogy is in general, unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion (2.8), notwithstanding the objections which may seem to lie against it, and the real ground which there may be for difference of opinion, as to the particular degree of weight which is to be laid upon it. This is a general account of what may be looked for in the following treatise. And I shall begin it with that which is the foundation of all our hopes and of all our fears; all our hopes and fears, which are of any consideration; I mean a future life.

Too many critics have disregarded the clause underlined here. Without the "found to be inconclusive" clause, Butler is open to an obvious objection. The careless critics take Butler to have shown that the objections to the Christian dispensation [as presented in the Bible] are open to objections analogous to those raised against the course and constitution of nature understood as the work of a benevolent deity. Butler, they say, as an *ad hominem* refutation of the deists, who have a prior commitment to this deity, but he has no effective case against atheists who go further and deny God and the Bible. Thus, Butler is not open to this popular reversal argument since he claims the analogous objections are not conclusive against the God of the deists. Not only does he make this claim, he defends it at length in Part I of the *Analogy*, his defense of the natural religion Butler has if anything, helped his opponents. Neglect of the phrase "where they are found in fact to be inconclusive," has resulted in much critical misunderstanding and has given too many readers the impression that Butler inadvertently made the world safe for atheists if not deists.

Butler further states: “The evidence of religion not appearing obvious, may constitute one particular part of some men’s trial, in the religious sense: as it gives scope, for a virtuous exercise, or vicious neglect of their understanding in examining, or not examining into that evidence.” (AR 2.6.8)

Nature and scripture (science and religion) are on the same footing: they are ultimately grounded on the work of the creator, a creator who continues to rule as governor. For many of us none of this is obvious, nor is the supremacy of conscience clear to some of the most adept philosophers. What is clear is the intellectual and spiritual obligation to take these matters seriously and investigate at least to the limits of common sense and common reason.

The first half of this book is intended to demonstrate that there is no defect or distraction in the world or in human nature sufficient to prevent a reasonable person from living a life of virtue and piety, and if there is no sufficient reason not to live such a life, then there is every reason to pursue the life of virtue and piety with great vigor since there is a greater probability that the life of virtue and piety will yield more personal and communal happiness than that of any other type of life, and this is true even if the hope of happiness in any case turns out to be rather low, well less than an even chance.

Now in the second half of the book, we must seek some insight into what it is to live as a person of virtue and piety, and how such a life will differ depending on whether one is an atheist, a deist, a theist or an agnostic. These terms are intended to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive for the purposes of philosophical discussion and do not necessarily reflect perfectly their use in ordinary or professional language.

Our aim has been the traditional aim of philosophy: to move whoever cares to be moved in the direction of living the life of virtue and piety. Our method has been that of Bishop Butler and his way of doing philosophy: we try to remove the various impediments, distractions, and inhibitions that stand in the way of such a life, and to do so without any compromise of anyone’s character, morality or intellectual integrity.

Butler did not consider doubts about the existence of God a significant impediment to living the life of virtue and piety or to believing in the credibility of conscience or of the scripture-revelation. Butler blamed the religious infidelity of his time on “thoughtlessness and the common temptations of life” more than speculative difficulties. About 300 years later the situation has changed, and we must work Butler’s project somewhat differently than he did. As we pointed out previously, Butler claimed that God’s existence had been proved this is no longer true. In the “Introduction” to the *Analogy* Butler first reiterates his concern with the practical as determined by probability:

> This method then of concluding and determining being practical, and what, if we will act at all, we cannot but act upon in the common pursuits of life; being evidently conclusive, in various degrees, proportionable to the degree and exactness of the whole analogy or likeness; and having so great authority for its introduction

> into the subject of religion, even revealed religion; my design is to apply it to that subject in general, both natural and revealed.

The passage continues with a list of proofs of God, whom Butler designates as "an intelligent author of nature, and natural governor of the world":

> taking for proved, that there is an intelligent author of nature, and natural governor of the world. For as there is no presumption against this prior to the proof of it: so it has been often proved [1] with accumulated evidence; [2] from this argument of analogy and final causes; [3] from abstract reasonings; [4] from the most antient tradition and testimony; and [5] from the general consent of mankind. Nor does it appear, so far as I can find, to be denied, by the generality of those who profess themselves dissatisfied with the evidence of religion. [AR.intro.8]

Now, suppose for the sake of argument that God is understood to be the intelligent author of nature and the natural governor of the world, and suppose conscience is the image and voice of God within us, and as such is a reliable if not perfect rule for living. Now suppose, for the sake of argument, that God does not exist. God's non-existence means that the description of God just provided does not refer to anything. That there is no God deprives us of an explanation for the authority of conscience, but it need not deprive us of that authority. The civil government is analogous. We may find ourselves without a theory to explain the authority of civil government, but that does not prevent us from acknowledging and obeying that (alleged) authority.

Summary. Butler nowhere assumes (or presumes) the existence of God, as is often claimed even by sympathetic commentators. Rather Butler takes God's existence for proved because there were many proofs of God in the air at the time, for example, Clarke's Boyle lectures that Butler had commented on previously, the five proofs mentioned here, and a few others, which Butler alludes to. Butler requires that all the evidence for God be considered and that it be considered in the form of a cumulative case. Finally, he points out that even those who are dissatisfied with the evidence for Christian religion do not deny the existence of God. This last line is often taken to be a reference to the deists although Butler nowhere uses that expression. Any discussion of Butler in relation to the deists needs to bear in mind the point that deism was already in decline by 1736 when Butler supposedly defeated it, and yet survived, Thomas Paine for example was a deist, into the later 18th century.

9 Alleged Revelations are Crammed with Error, Exaggeration, and Contradiction [71]

God (the creator) discloses himself in the works of creation: the natural world, human nature, and scripture revelation. As Butler would pefer to supply premises only, so the creator leaves the discovery of his will and the enactment up to us. The mandate here is not for this or for that but for an attitude of readiness, of attention, an ability to read the signs and respond to them.

The grounding for this chapter is in the principle of fairness regarding argumentation and persuasion. A serious moral transgression is committed if one attempts to suppress, rig, or manipulate the evidence in any way. Not only is any omission an offense, so is any negligence in identifying and collecting evidence, and any shortfall of imagination in arranging the total evidence as a cumulative case. In dealing with questions of God and religion, the methods used must be free of bias in order to reach the desired result of broad-based collaboration in the interpretation of any purported revelation. Thus in a general way we are following Butler's method.

Butler famously declared that he was unable to find an atheist to argue with since the proofs of God had been successful against them. Butler's words have frustrated some commentators. As mentioned previously, many have thought that since Butler presumes the proof of God has been successful he is assuming that God exists, a very different matter from assuming that the proofs have been successul for the simple reason that no one seems to have replied to Clarke's Boyle Lectures, for example. For our purposes we will have to modify Butler's position to acknowledge the state of the proof of God's existence today, and we will have to expand on the consequences ('effect') of Butler's argument if successul.[72]

Our argument will emphasize the significance of the concessions made by some atheists today (as did Butler), and then stress the practices of attending to the world both of nature and of scripture. Such attention supplies us with premises which can be arranged as a cumulative case of all the material available, and ends not with acceptance of anything "on faith" but with the effect of become more focused and intelligent evidence gathering.

Demonstrative arguments claim the conclusion follows with certainty from the premises, probabilitic arguments that, given the premises, the conclusion is more likely than not. A certain or likely conclusion is ordinarily actionable. In the case of religion, the practices of religion are warranted also if the evidence is sufficient to make the religion actionable even if the associated conclusions are less than an even chance. Thus, in the American legal system, a defendant who is

[71] Originally presented in another form as a paper at the 1st World Congress on Logic and Religion in João Pessoa, Brazil, April 1-5, 2015.

[72] We, like Butler, take the proof of God's existence seriously. Such proofs are essential to the whole package of evidence and argumentation in defense of living the life of virtue and piety. In constructing this larger case Butler builds on what he is given. Thus, he claims ethics is autonomous of religion and the case for the good does not depend on the case for religion, and that concession of all or part of the case for God is gladly accepted.

likely guilty but there is insufficent evidence, is routinely released by virtue of the rule that guilt must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. Again, the fire alarm goes off, and we leave the building, thinking is is highly unlikely there really is a fire. Nevertheless, "the building is on fire" is actionable, and we are suppose to leave with as much determination as if we knew for certain there was a fire. (This example has been challened. Some people routinely ignore fire alarms.)

The scheme proposed here is designed to answer and eliminate from the start (Phase One) the stock objections raised against any philosophical theology: that the deity of philosophy is not the God of religion, that the deity cannot or need not be proved, and that it is impossible to discover a definite and infallible expression of the divine will.

Phase One

The first phase is aimed at developing a concept of God that is at least minimally possible and is at least consistent with what is affirmed by many religions and with what is denied by those who do not subscribe. The premise that God is possible however improbable has been granted by athesists and agnostics, such as Bertrand Russell (1952: 547-548) and by the many devout people who reject and disparage proofs of God and all the methods and outcomes of natural theology, such as Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth. The modern attack on natural theology is often presented in terms of Hegel vs. Kierkegaard and Brunner vs. Barth. The popular classroom and public discussions in terms of a we/they mentality have done a disservice to the profound, complex and pressing issues at stake, as several more recent commentaries have shown. This book as a defense of natural theology maintains that there is no reason not to help ourselves without evidence or argument to whatever Kierkegaard or Barth is willing to concede on grounds of faith, and that the only way to preach to those who maintain an evidentialist ethics of belief is to cross the street and address them in the only terms they can understand.[73]

The first phase, that of concept construction, is aimed at gaining acceptance by as wide a range of people as possible, and also, by basing the concept entirely on the sayings and doings of those who are incontestably proponents or opponents of the practice of religion, to forclose the possibility of anyone objecting that what we have defended or proved here is a God of philosophy and not the God of religion.

Before we can construct any of the traditional proofs we must develop a concept of God that (1) associates the being of the conclusion of the arguments with religious practices so there

[73] Kroner, Richard, "Kierkegaard or Hegel?" *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol. 6, No. 19 (1) (1952), pp. 79-96 Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23936922 Accessed: 17-12-2019 22:24 UTC; Williams, Daniel D., "Brunner and Barth on Philosophy," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Oct., 1947), pp. 241-254. Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1198866 Accessed: 17-12-2019 22:42 UTC

is no possibility of confusing any of the Gods of philosophy with the God of religion, and that (2) is sufficient for construction of the arguments. The concept must be that of a being whose existence is possible, but that is all. The antecedent probability of the concept being instantiated may be very small, as long as it is greater than zero. The reason for this is that with one line of argument, that called the ontological argument, the usual formulations take us from the premise that God is possible to the conclusion that God exists.

As advocates of the total evidence as a cumulative case we are potentially open to any information or argumentation, but our appeal to established and universal practice, i.e., the linguistic and graphic practices of affirming or denying or quesioning the existence of a supreme deity, certainly places a heavy burden of proof and a heavy burden of presenting evidence on the opposition.

The resulting concept is essentially associated with the lived practice of religion. Those who are at present parties to the conversation may be seen as forming a system with numerous whole/part relationships, usually identified by the linguistic competences including not only practical knowledge of languages but also abilities to use and innovate in language, to play various language games, to carry out an array of speech acts, and to translate. The natural languages all create communities of literacy of their own. The lived practice of religion is necessarily tied to the language or languages used by the adherents.

While we acknowledge the ideal of a universal library (Bertoloni 1999: 469-486) we also recognize that a universal conversation is impossible. This principle of ignorance should lead us to a greater modesty and a more democratic understanding of religion, which will be referred to as the Harvard Plan, (Phrases like "Harvard Plan," or "Harvard Way," usually refer to the personalist attitudes inspired and informed by Wilfred Cantwell Smith which were influential at Harvard in the years after World War II) but instead has resulted in the constructions of hierarchies that assign a lower position to those who are unknown, and among those who are known to a degree, to those who are more ancient and removed from us.

The genealogy presented here begins with the Biblical notion of a creator (Elohim of Genesis and the Logos of John's Gospel), goes on to the scholastic concept of a supreme being (as developed by Anselm of Canterbury and a long line of successors including Leibniz, Charles Hartshorne and Norman Malcolm, on down to the more recent work of Melvin Fitting). Fitting[74] is a well-known mathematician who has chosen to comment at length on the philosophical literature. His bibliography, for what it includes and for what it leaves out, is therefore of special relevance for the total evidence theme of this paper.

Phase Two

The second phase continues the same strategy of bringing in as much evidence as possible, much of it logically redundant, but with the intent of gaining the widest range of support for sufficient premises to reach the conclusion, a conclusion which is, again, minimal.

[74] Melvin Fitting, *Types, Tableaus, and Gödel's God.* Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002.

Thus we move from the assertion of the minimal possibility of God existing to the assertion that God exists, again understood minimally and without content except as is required to connect with the lived practice of religion on the one hand and the inference ticket "if God is possible then God is actual" on the other.

Proof of Existence [75]

The cumulative case argument of phase two is constructed by various appeals, and whatever more may become available. Kant divides the proofs into those based on the concept alone, those based on the existence of the world, and those based on some features of the world. Besides these arguments, appeal may also be made to concessions made by the other side, and to established presumptions that put the burden of proof on the other side. Appeals to testimony and to authority may also be helpful since, for example, opponents of God's existence are often impressed by Bertrand Russell's (1952) concession that God's existence is possible.
If the classic fideists are classified as those who acknowledge (at least) the existence of God, then we can appeal to that acceptance on their part even though they disparaged and dismissed the activity of natural theology which is our principal endeavor. We are intent on getting to God the hard way, but we are glad to accept whatever concessions come our way.

The so-called "usual suspects" of fideism including Pascal, Kierkegaard, James, and Wittgenstein,[76] all represent paths to God that do not require further proof outside themselves and are therefore *fundamentally* or *basically* evidential rather than non-evidential. People like Pascal, Kierkegaard, James, and Wittgenstein do not just adopt beliefs without reason. They dislike and distrust evidence, but they give an explanation for not needing evidence. The remain within the circle of point and counterpoint.

As far as the foundations of the cumulative case go, we know that Bishop Butler must have had Pascal in mind to some degree, and that James cites Pascal in his "The Will to Believe." (1896). We also know that Wittgenstein greatly admired Kierkegaard and James, and that Butler's theory of the passions is largely in accord with Kierkegaard's. Most importantly, whatever their differences on the precise nature and status of natual theology, Pascal, Butler, Kierkegaard, James, and Wittgenstein are as one in seeing a great divide between the received academic philosophy of religion and the kind of philosophy that is of help to people in real life. They are, we might say, all exemplars of the therapeutic or pastoral view of philosophy. It would seem to be a grave error for the philosophical field-hospital to offer only one style of therapy for all in the name of a "foolish consistency." As Bishop Butler said in a line favored by Moore and by Wittgenstein, "A thing is what it is and not another thing."

[75] Atheists who deny God because of evidence against God or because of a general lack of evidence, are welcome to work though this section. Dogmatic atheists, whose case against God is not evidence-based, may find this section unrewarding.
[76] At one time a pupil of Bertrand Russell.

Non-fideistic lines rely on reason and dismiss an approach based on faith alone. Following Kant, the non-fideistic lines may be exhaustively divided into the *a priori* and the a posteriori, with the *a posteriori* divided into those whose primary premise is that the world exists and those whose primary premises catalog certain properties of the world. Those that appeal to properties of the world are further divided into the appeal to design in nature, and the appeal to art and artifact, with art and artifact further divided into objects and testimony. These paths to God and religion have been well trod, and many have reported success. Therefore, the burden of proof is on the objector who claims these lines of thought do not lead to God. Some opponents will refuse the burden, so we must add arguments showing that the burden of proof is on those who raise objections to an established and ostensibly successful practice. Finally, since these categories all deal with the insufficiency of evidence in one form or another, files must be opened on those who maintain all religious and metaphysical talk is meaningless and signifies nothing, that certain positions in philosophy and religion are contradictory and ought to be discarded on that grounds, and finally that the problem of evil and the sufficiency of natural science defeat any attempt to defend God and religion.

The cumulative case tradition in Christian apologetics is "especially manifest in the [predominantly] Anglican tradition, going right back to Richard Hooker, and showing up in a fecund discussion that runs all the way from Bishop Butler, John Wesley, John Henry Newman, F. R. Tennant, Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, up to William P. Alston. In fact, Mitchell and Swinburne represent two quite different strands of thought within this tradition, with Mitchell opting for informal judgment and Swinburne preferring the formalizing of judgment in his appeal to Bayes' theorem" (Abraham 2007). Sometimes Abraham (2010) adds to this list William Chillingworth, John Locke, William Tennant, and J.R. Lucas, but it must be recognized there are important differences in both the personal affiliation of these writers and the intent with which they have constructed their arguments.

The earliest use of this type of cumulative case argument (attempting to accumulate as much evidence as possible and then deploying that evidence in accord with the prejudices of the anticipated audience) seems to have been developed by Samuel Clarke in his Boyle Lectures (1704), and by Clarke's protégé, Bishop Butler in his *Analogy of Religion* (1736): 2.7.2.

The ontological proof requires only the admission that the God of the constructed concept may exist, no matter how small the probability and acceptance of the conditional that if God is possible then God exists. This proof goes to the existence of God and the common and perennial religious practice. Some urge more than the minimum, but the point of this case is to defeat the opposition, while leaving room for individual variations as regards the details of belief and practice, and for the instruction of students and the unconverted with full intellectual integrity.

Those who insist on more than the minimum proposed here for the conclusion will at least see their material included in full among the premises and may appeal to it regarding individual practice.

Russell's dismissal of the ontological argument as not worth further investigation has drawn some vigorous dissent. In August of 1970, after Russell's death, Kurt Gödel's work on the

ontological argument started to circulate (Lowe 2012). To date there have been many attempts to formalize Gödel's proof to a level that is suitable for automated theorem proving or at least computer verification via proof assistants, and at least one international conference focused on developments in research on the ontological argument.[77]

This project made headlines in German newspapers. According to the authors of this effort, they were inspired by Melvin Fitting's book. (2002) Two points need to be noted. The German newspaper headlines were the result of someone with less skill at popularization than Russell talking to reporters, and no one is claiming that Russell's main point is being refuted. The work that Gödel initiated is part of the normal progress of science, is entirely within the evidentialist camp, and has nothing to do with mysticism, or fideism, or any alleged revelation outside the arena of scientific investigation. Gödel's "Theorem 2: The property of being God-like is consistent" is his expression of the ordinary language statement that "It is possible that God exists," and it is this point that Russell grants.

Phase Three

A very large number of writers have belabored the point that they dislike, distrust, or otherwise reject either particular lines of argument or all lines of argument leading to the conclusion that God exists, but there is an absurdity in the view that grants the conclusion while rejecting the evidential line. The only reason to present an evidential line is to support the conclusion or to help people understand the conclusion. Therefore, the fact that one person, a fideist, is unconvinced or unilluminated is irrelevant to whether someone else might be helped by the line of argument. If the conclusion, in this case that God exists, is accepted based on evidence presented, or conceded without evidential support, then there is nothing more to discuss; we are ready to move on to the next step. Furthermore, if a person is unconvinced by a version of the proof, nothing follows; we simply go on to consider revisions of that proof, or one of the other species of proof. And according to the principle of total evidence, these very numerous lines of argument must not be considered only in isolation, but also as a cumulative case.

The argument so far has been that if we begin by taking as given the varieties of religious practice and speculation found in almost all times and all places, we can construct a concept of a being or process supreme and sacred that is the author and source directly or indirectly of all that is. And from the concept so constructed, we see a case can be made for the existence of such a being, and that the objections to his existential proof can be answered sufficiently to make the existential claim actionable.

Thus, we can move from the given phenomena of religion to the actionable claim that human nature, along with everything else, is from God and the presumption there is a point or

[77] *Mathematicians and their Gods: Interactions between mathematics and religious beliefs*, edited by Snezana Lawrence and Mark McCartney (OUP, 2015) provides background and explanation on the whole long story of religion in terms of the history of mathematics. Speaks (2018) is a more recent critical treatment.

purpose, *telos,* intended outcome, for human beings. Examination of human nature shows not that people are reasonable but that the reasonable person standard is that by which all candidates for the end of humanity are to be judged. It is with the concept of the reasonable that all our evidence and arguments must have an end. Those who will not accept the reasonable person standard have no business being on the jury and we will not pretend to argue with them. Given the existential claim, the reasonable person will act minimally to be in a state of watchfulness for a communication from the supreme, ultimate, and sacred being.

There are four possibilities *besides the agnostic*, but individuals do not necessarily fit comfortably in only one category. There are, for example, atheists with a positive attitude toward religion on moral or aesthetic grounds.

Atheism indifferent to religion:	no God	no communication
Atheism hostile to religion		
Secular Humanism:	no God	religious communication of human origin
Deism:	God	but no communication of divine origin
Theism:	God	communication of divine origin
Agnostic (1)		neither affirms nor denies God
Agnostic (2)		paradoxically affirms all views

In Butler's time, the important division was between theists and deists. Both accept the existence of God, but deists do not accept the Bible or anything else as a revelatory communication. For deists, the world itself is revelation enough. Today theists are likely to see the other three categories as different peas in the same pod. They do not follow the Book. There is nothing to prevent any of the four who reject revelation as communication from God from engaging in ritual observances.

The argument so far has eliminated from contention atheism and secular humanism by appeal to the total evidence taken as a cumulative case conceptually derived from religious practice. There remains, of course, the possibility that some atheist psychologist of the future will succeed in giving a satisfying naturalistic account of all purported communications from the alleged divine, sacred, and supreme source, but for the time being the affirmation of the existence of God is actionable and the presumption is in favor of some sort of communication, a communication with a divine source that is identifiable, intelligible, and actionable, that can serve as the guide to life.

Given the ruined state of the world and of human nature, it is only to be expected that there will be considerable difficulty in identifying, interpreting, and responding to the communication. Our concern is to insist on the total evidence as needed to be consulted to be watchful.

The present state must be taken as one of social and prosthetic extensions, and the construction of such is one of the best examples of the conditions of James' will to believe. That is, when confronted with an alleged revelation, we are confronted with a live option that is forced

and momentous, and that tends to become true as a result of our approaching the purported revelation as in fact from God. The attribution of the message as being from God is, of course, a matter of fact that can in no way be affected by what we believe, but the meaning or interpretation of the (alleged) communication is affected by how we read it. The appeal to the total evidence considered as a cumulative case in being watchful for communications from the God whose existence has been proved, communications which according to our argument must be everywhere, has a marked tendency not to determine the source of the communication but to determine how well we are able to understand it, along the general lines of faith seeking understanding.

The principle of watchfulness advocated for here applies to all that Butler attributes to God. Thus, we are to be watchful with regarding signs of God in the natural world, in human nature, as well as in the alleged revelation of scripture. Watchfulness regarding Butler's many hundreds of references to scripture requires more that the acceptance of scripture as "true" but without "proof" Butler does appeal to scripture testimony, but he also appeals to the wisdom of scripture on matters of human behavior.

The total evidence requirement demands that all evidence, favorable and unfavorable be considered. One of the most important points to bear in mind in trying to manage the total evidence and present it as a cumulative case is that the field of mystery far exceeds the field of knowledge. The Bible and all the Christian theologians agree that God is not an object of human knowledge who provides easy answers, so that the bold claim is not even a point at issue. If one is willing to refer at all to the "task of Christianity," then it seems incumbent on us to provide a clear statement of what that that task is and on what grounds we claim to know that what we are doing is within the scope of such a task.

A full exposition of the total evidence for God and religion can only procede by admitting how little is known, and that therefore any conclusion in these matters must depend in large part on appeal to the burden of proof and the forced choice.

We must also attend to those who are wary of or reject outright the use of reason with regard to religion. Their work is appealed to in the initial phenomenology, and will again be cited regarding the cumulative case, but we cannot claim to have examined the total evidence, even the total evidence available to us unless we can find a way to draw into the first order discussion all those who resist our favored conclusion, albeit one of personal preference and personal practice.

The full field of opposition includes those who find false premises or fallacious reasoning, those who simply reject our conclusion outright, those who detest and sneer at the use of reason in the examination of religious matters, those who claim exemption on grounds of having incompatible religous allegiences, and those who disagree regarding the assignment of the burden of proof or the methods used to weigh the evidence. There is a full spectrum of opposition ranging from generally sympathetic and colleagial or perversely adversarial.

Summation

The main line of argument pursued here is to first insist that there is some possiblity, however slight, that God exists based on the experience and practice of believers and unbelievers, and then argue in the tradition of Anselm of Canturbury that since there is some perhaps small chance that God exists it must be the case that God in fact exists. As a young man Anselm had a direct experience of God. The intent of his famous "proof" was to add understanding to what he already believed. Anyone can examine the works of nature, the works of art, and the works of scripture, but it is only those convinced of God's existence, who are likely to be motivated for a large-scale and collaborative study of the whole of creation with the intention of determining what creation has to say to us. Those who believe by faith alone often have no use for the proofs. But others will not believe without proof. And there are those who will distrust their faculties if they prove inadequate to address such questions as God's existence. If the creation is a communication, then it is incumbant on all of us to do all we can to develop a community of interpretation. Some may claim they are able to do without the community since they have had a "direct" experience of God. Granting for the sake of argument that there is a God and that God has spoken to such a person, we still have no way of knowing how to interpret the testimony. Such people are open to Hobbes' reply: did God come to you in a dream or did you dream God came to you?

10 Enthusiasm and Superstition Drain the Energy Needed to Live the Devout Life

> The extravagances of enthusiasm and superstition do not at all lie in the road of common sense; and therefore, so far as they are *original mistakes*, must be owing to going beside or beyond it. Now, since inquiry and examination can relate only to things so obscure and uncertain as to stand in need of it, and to persons who are capable of it; the proper advice to be given to plain honest men, to secure them from the extremes both of superstition and irreligion, is that of the Son of *Sirach: In every good work trust thy own soul; for this is the keeping of the commandment*. (FS.5.15)[78]

Enthusiasm and Superstition are not cognitive disorders, and Methodism was a party within the Church of England when Butler and Wesley were alive. Enthusiasm is manifested by an extreme and unwarranted emotional response. To be superstitious is to act emphatically in a way that goes beyond the available evidence. It is typically based on a folk belief or a desire to control events using false conclusions. Butler associates superstition with excessive ritualization (external religion) at the expense of internal religion, often identified with moralization. For Butler the "pagan" is the paradigm of superstition, Methodism, as he knew it, of enthusiasm. At the end of the line, of both lines, is group insanity, as represented in the anecdote repeated by Josiah Tucker, who at one time was Butler's chaplain. Butler's method in all of this is to deliver to the people as much evidence as possible, in the form of a cumulative case, and leave them free to draw their own conclusions. 'Superstitious' is pejorative in all uses, but 'enthusiastic' is disparaging only in some contexts, and today often has positive connotations.[79]

The most important texts are Butler's conversation with Wesley, his sermons on the Love of God, and the commentary by Lewis White Beck (1937). The best transcripts of the sessions with Wesley are those published by Frank Baker (1980).

Butler complains, in a much-quoted line, about pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost being a horrid thing. Most commentators have seen fit to take sides, and with few exceptions such as Ronald Knox, they have sided with Wesley, and been unkind to Butler for having called Wesley's enthusiasm horrid. The trouble is that Wesley, and this part of the transcript is never quoted, immediately disassociates his work from George Whitefield, and

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[78] Butler cites hundreds of passages from the Bible, but he was especially fond of the Wisdom of Sirach or Book of Ecclesiasticus. The Lord is the root of wisdom (1: 6-9). We should be generous with what we know but also reserved in talking about what we do not know (5: 11-13, 9:18). There is a determined reliance on experience throughout, for example, at FS 6:33. The metaphor here is to be taken seriously. It may be that the root metaphor is the root metaphor, no tautology intended.

[79] Butler's ambivalence regarding Catholicism is expressed in the "Durham Charge." The charge of enthusiasm against Methodists was made directly to Wesley when he met with Butler.

denies pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost, at least none beyond what every Christian might receive. Butler counters that he has heard of people falling into fits at Wesley's meetings. Wesley replies that he prays for them to be delivered and they often recover. At this point Butler as the Bishop of Bristol, tells Wesley he is not authorized to preach in the Diocese of Bristol. Wesley claimed that as a graduate of Lincoln College he was entitled to preach anywhere. Wesley, of course, ignored the bishop.

The Love of God as the Ultimate Enthusiasm

The problem with naturalistic or rationalistic reconstructions of religion is that naturalists remain unconvinced, and religionists are likely to be offended by the project itself. Butler suggested analogies that, in practice, were as compelling as deductive arguments since probability is the guide to life. These analogies not only acknowledged human ignorance but insisted on ignorance as the salient characteristic of the human condition.

Butler's work on ethics is still studied by secular philosophers and his defense of religion was, at least during the nineteenth century, one of the most widely read and applauded of all Christian books. That the last of the *Fifteen Sermons* corresponds to the *Analogy of Religion* and that "Of the Nature of Virtue" appended to the *Analogy* reviews the argument of the sermons. But sermons 13 and 14, on the love of God, are thoroughly, and rather mysteriously, neglected. This neglect is all the more mysterious since in his 1729 "Preface" to the second edition of the sermons, Butler himself calls attention to the significance of these sermons as defending the religious analogue of a main theme of his moral philosophy, namely, that virtue is to be pursued as an end in itself (Pref. 42).

In 1934, Silvan Tomkins was awarded a doctorate by the University of Pennsylvania for arguing that the sermons on the love of God, as opposed to the first three sermons, on human nature, are "the proper introduction to the system of Butler." Then, a few years later, in 1937, but apparently without any knowledge of Tomkins' work, Lewis White Beck introduced himself to the profession with an article also on sermons 13 and 14, and this time very appropriately titled, "A Neglected Aspect of Butler's Ethics." Beck himself later became about as well-known as anyone working in the history of philosophy and an influential administrator, but this article of his was as neglected as it would have been had it never appeared in print at all. Beck's own university, Rochester, omitted this paper when it reprinted Beck's collected papers. Predrag Cicovacki, who edited the Beck collection for the U of R, points out (in a personal conversation) that Beck himself requested the omission. Apparently, Beck gave no reason for the request, and we are unable to locate documentation.

This neglect by those who otherwise have a strong interest in Butler is, certainly, mysterious, but we do not think it is inexplicable. The sermons on the love of God show a side of Butler that was not particularly welcome to any of the various parties who urged the study of Butler's works. For at least a century now, the main interest in Butler's ethics has been underwritten by the fact that his ethics can be studied with little or no reference to God. This

does no injustice to Butler's thought since one of Butler's own claims was that ethics is fully autonomous. For Butler, the authority of morals derives from the constitution of human nature and is independent of motives, expectations, or actual consequences, and independent attribution to the will of God. Admittedly our understanding of virtue and vice in practice depends on upbringing, education, and local culture. (Harris. 2012, 215)

Those who, by contrast, are interested in Butler mainly as a religious apologist have little use for the sermons on the love of God since, in contrast to part I of the *Analogy*, they present the spiritual side of Butler, and in contrast to part II of the *Analogy*, they defend the worship of God without any reference to Christ or the Christian religion. What we have in sermons 13 and 14 is, therefore, a manual of deistic spirituality, and as such it at least hints at a way into the experience of religion that is open to anyone. The varieties of religious experience can all be considered elaborations on what Butler calls "the love of God."

Butler was a hierarchic thinker in the sense that his arguments depend on the structure of a hierarchy he claims to have observed in nature. These arguments include an appeal to authority, but that the alleged superior is authoritative depends on the nature of the perceived hierarchy. Before Butler or anyone can appeal to a hierarchy, a cogent and convincing case must be made for the critical nature of the structure. Butler presents or at least alludes to the position of conscience in human nature, the place of the Bible in religious and historical literature, of the monarch in the political order of England, of the priests in the church, and of God and his angels in the cosmos. We may be uncomfortable with Butler's tendency to overstate or understate, to abbreviate or elaborate, but whatever the nature of our discontent we have recourse to conduct our own inquiry into the empirical credibility of Butler's claims. In Butler's view, we have a right to assistance by colleagues and collaborators of our own choosing (consistent with our business of seeking the truth) to whatever training, preparatio1751n, or access seems indicated, and in coordination with these rights we have a positive obligation to enhance and advance our own situation and that of our neighbors in the direction of a general flourishing and attainment of the good life.

The completion, perfection, or consummation of something is best understood by a consideration of the ends to which the object is best adapted. Butler's motto might well have been "the right tool for the right task". Butler's business in life is to seek truth unashamed to learn from anyone, and he understood well the importance of tending to one's own business. Acceptance of the theological proposition of a deity who has instituted a grand division of labor over the whole creation, and of the moral proposition that we know perfectly well our part in the whole but have no knowledge of the ultimate point and purpose of things may be helpful in going about our business but is not necessary for successful completion. God or no God, we all have an obligation to pay our debts, to return what we have borrowed, and to honor our contracts and covenants. God or no God we have binding obligations to care for the Earth and to render assistance to others when such help is wanted and needed. No one complies perfectly, but those who show a flagrant disregard for injunctions of this sort must be reformed or face exclusion by the community. Butler is only occasionally in the literature of criminology, but that particular

literature and its associated practices and research, is directly relevant to Butler's main concern of how best to maintain order in society for the benefit of all. Such concerns can only be pursued both with and without the God hypothesis if only because what matters is not only the truth regarding the world but also what the mind of the people thinks is the truth regarding the world.

Butler never claimed to have presented anything new. What he insisted on was not the originality of his thought or his own importance as a writer, but rather the importance of his message. Butler's only intention was to lead a life of virtue and piety. He thought that all else of value in life, even happiness, could be subsumed under virtue and piety, both of which had been known, studied, and practiced since antiquity. His priestly vocation was that of one who urges others to lead a life of virtue and piety.

The attraction of Butler's method is apparent once one comes to see the economy of his thought. That is, Butler had the ability to reach out to people in almost any state of mind, to set before them and bring to their attention certain acknowledged facts, to get them to see the urgency of adopting a life of piety and virtue, and then of sending them off in hot pursuit of life's goal. This is the historical Butler, as opposed to the Butler who appears in most histories of philosophy.[80]

Since we approach Butler's whole works in this way, we have called Butler a "pastoral philosopher." The arguments Butler gives include all the standard moves known to those who have studied classical rhetoric, and he is as happy to borrow a story from the Bible as a syllogism from the schoolmen. What distinguishes a pastoral philosopher from any other has nothing to do with the arguments given, but only with their initial motivation and with how one knows that argumentation is at an end. The motivation for work in pastoral philosophy is always some practical problem. For Butler the only practical problems that mattered were those of deciding to abandon one's prior life and adopt a life of virtue and piety, and then of how to overcome fear, anxiety or any other distraction in living the life of virtue and piety.

There are many such problems, but two that keep appearing are (1) the fear that the life of virtue and piety is foolishly mistaken, based more on wishful thinking than on how the world really is and (2) the anxiety that results from <u>not</u> being completely convinced that the life of virtue and piety and the pursuit of happiness are entirely coincident. These, of course, are the problem of the epistemological foundations of moral and religious knowledge and the problem of duty and interest. For the pastoral philosopher, however, these are practical problems to be resolved in action rather than puzzles to be solved intellectually.

This distinction is subtle and difficult to grasp because we encounter a lot of interference from the much more familiar distinction between faith and reason. The rationalists enjoy a good laugh at the expense of those who believe without enough reason, and the fideists return the favor with scorn for those too timid to take the leap of faith. The Butlerian pastoral philosopher has little patience with either of these parties.

[80] Cunliffe (1992) on Butler's Episcopate.

Butler saw all things as "from God." He maintained that we cannot, in this life, know God, and that "words fail" when we try to say anything about God. For us, God is "that from which all things proceed." Therefore, when Butler consults conscience, he is consulting God's voice. When he reflects and considers reason, he is listening to God. When he observes the course and constitution of nature, he is looking at God's work. What this comes to is not any claim or affirmation, but rather a life lived not only in the presence of God, which would be true of any life assuming God exists, but a life lived with an extraordinarily heightened sense of the presence of God. Thus, we see no reason not to acknowledge a spiritual side to Butler, and we think that without that acknowledgement it is difficult to make sense out of what Butler says.

We do not consider Butler a "writer" or an "author." He was a pastor, a preacher, and a bishop. Butler distinguished between the joy found in contemplation of nature or works of art and the vain amusements. That is, amusements that degrade, bore, even brutalize. Again, the distinction is simply between that which leads us toward a life of virtue and piety and that which distracts us. The question to be asked, is not what the literary or philosophical critic might think of these documents, but how useful they are to one with pastoral desires or intentions. So far, we have merely *claimed* that the sermons on the love of God are models of pastoral process in philosophy, in what follows we try to make good on that claim by considering some passages from the sermons on the love of God in detail.

There are two axes in Butler's system. The world was created and is ruled in love. The world has a purpose and life is meaningful. The world reciprocates this original love by submitting to and following the will of its creator, by living in imitation of the original creative force. As an empiricist Butler understood however much he and many others might believe in the reciprocal love of the world and its creator, the appearance of the world, our living space, is in sharp contrast to a love supreme, on either side. "Act of God" is a phrase used often for natural disasters, and the human history is a narrative of deviation from the path of reciprocal love, as when humans are destructive and cruel. The other axis is also reciprocal running from one self-loving individual to another potentially without limit in the bonds of a love often call benevolence.

Analysis of Butler's Evidence and Argumentation on the Love of God

> … the philosophy of Butler reserves for the affections their proper place. We find his estimate of them on every appropriate occasion with which the subjects of his *Sermons* supply him…. But we have also the direct evidence afforded by the "Sermons on the Love of God." He notes with care the ascending stages of this love. It should pass beyond all servile fear, and should attain to ('resignation,' a phrase by which Butler means not the merely passive sentiment, but an entire concurrence with the Divine Will. [This concurrence is the 'effect,' as Butler would say, toward which religious writers, artists, and rulers aspire.] All earthly objects, he observes, leave a void in us, which only God Himself can adequately supply. He

> believes that heaven will provide a happiness coming directly from God Himself, and not merely as now from the intermediate objects which He presents to our view. Butler's religion undoubtedly was marked with that reserve which is a marked characteristic of English piety, which may sometimes be carried into excess, but which is so far from implying a deficiency in fervour, that it rather indicates a dread lest the emotions of holy devotion should come to be mixed with inferior elements, and should be chilled by exposure to the rude climate of the world.[81]

The best place to begin with these two sermons is at the end. Since they seem to have been written originally as a single piece, we will make nothing of the division. Both were published as sermons on the text, from Matthew 22.37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Our main intent in this close reading and analysis is to determine the importance of God's existential status in the dynamic of Butler's system. The final paragraph of the second (FS 14.17) falls into three parts:

1. Let us suppose a person …
2. What could be more applicable …
3. I have seen an end of all perfection …"

This finale serves to illustrate the methods of the whole piece. In part II of the *Analogy*, Butler presents a lengthy argument ostensibly in defense of "revealed religion," but under our pastoral interpretation, the conclusion of part II of the *Analogy* is not acceptance of certain theological claims or certain claims about the Bible, but rather the practice of reading scripture, and not just reading, but earnestly and continually searching the scripture: "apply thyself to the text and the text to thyself." This effect is achieved by systematically removing any reason one could have not to search scripture seriously and habitually as a guide to life. For Christians, a Hebrew or Greek seminar may be beneficial. As previously stated, the existential claim that is central to Butler's whole argument is not the existence of God or the proof of the existence of God, although he certainly believed both claims[82]. What central and essential is that this God has accommodated us not so much so that we can know God but rather so that we might love God having experienced the effects of his goodness and live accordingly, that is to say, to live the life of virtue and piety. Since the arguments of Sermons 13 and 14 do not follow the patterns of Butler's other arguments but are so important for our purposes, we will present them in somewhat tedious detail.

[81] Gladstone, *Studies Subsidiary,* pp. 75-76.
[82] "Our reason convinces us that God is present with us" (FS.14.2)

Formatted Outline with Commentary: Sermon 13

1. **Objection** Love of God runs to enthusiasm.

Reply To avoid one extreme do not go to the other. It is not so much that we are to question what Butler did say in the sermons on the love of God for being "neglected," as that we need to be concerned for the number of commentators who fault Butler for failing to say just exactly what he does say in this paragraph: that too much can be made of the need for religion to be reasonable and that the heart and affections must not be neglected for the sake of trying to discern the truth.

2. **Definition** Love of God = all those affections due to God from humans or which rest in God as an end. The reference to resting in God as an end restates Butler's position in the classical controversy over whether love of God can be disinterested. **Butler explicitly cites the question "which was a few years ago disputed in France" in Pref.43, but since he so quickly and decisively states that, of course, disinterested love of God is possible, the sermons on the love of** God can hardly be said to be a contribution to or continuation of that controversy. James Mackintosh long ago argued that Thomas Aquinas anticipated and settled the question four hundred years earlier by showing that there can be a view to reward in our love of God. Butler seems to think the whole matter can be "fully determined" simply by attending to definitions, but his own definition is characteristically unclear. Here in 13.2, the love of God includes by definition all those affections due to God from humans or which rest in God as an end, but Butler also brings "into this definition" a specific list of affections, and one that differs somewhat from the list provided in 14.2. The whole matter is so much more neatly stated in 14.2 that we are tempted to think that Butler may simply never have gone back to revise 13 after he had sorted his thoughts out in 14, or even perhaps that 13 and 14 are not a single piece, as does appear from some internal evidence, but that 14 was an attempt to restate the whole matter. In 14.2-3, the whole of piety is resignation to the will of God, a "frame" or "temper" of "mind and heart" that is the source of "the most settled quiet and composure of mind." In our present state of imperfection, this resignation of made up of fear, hope and love, and which of these prevails is determined by the view we have of God and of our own character (14.2). By contrast, the list of affections included in the definition of our love of God provided in 13.2 is: fear of God's displeasure, reverence, ambition of God's love and approbation, delight in the hope or consciousness of God's love and approbation, and the affection "which is in the strictest sense called love."

3. Butler's **Summary.** The summary Butler presents here at the outset is critical to our interpretation of the text. What is a summary for, and why is this sort of summary given so early in the first sermon? Our answer is that just as the final paragraph of the second sermon is constructed to address both the mind and the heart of the reader (or listener), so this summary, far from being merely a short form of the whole, is actually a strategic passage intended to give

the reader just enough of a view of what is to follow so as to maximize the effect of the whole when it does come. That is, Butler seems to be saying that if one wants to end up with the frame of mind which he has defined as love of God, then one needs to approach the following sermons in a certain frame of mind preparatory, so to speak. Butler's preview, presented here in paraphrase and with some interpolations, is exceptionally clear. His words indicate something the reader is expected to *do* while reading.

Butler first states the path he will follow intellectually: Be mindful that:

- Human nature is so constituted as to feel certain affections upon the sight or contemplation of certain objects.
- It is natural for one who is good (to any degree) to feel affection upon sight or contemplation of a good character.
- The very notion of affection implies resting in its object as an end. It is easy for readers to assume that by "its object" Butler refers to the existential deity and probably he did, but for us it is the intensional deity that matters most. That is, what concerns us most is not whether our ideals exist, but whether they are ideals worthy of our devotion. An intensional object is something whether actually existing or not that the mind thinks about.

Next Butler traces the same path emotionally:

- A good character is presented for contemplation.
- The reaction of a good person to this character will be that of love, reverence, desire of approbation and delight in the hope or consciousness of approbation.
- Next contemplate God as infinitely more than an adequate object of these same affections.
- Now refine the regards expected of a good person upon contemplation of God into those most appropriate to the present state of probation and those that will be employed in a future state of perfection. (The effect of this is that both the fears and the hopes become more intense.)

Finally, notice that the affective state you are in now is that of loving God as appropriate to your present condition, but with your future state in mind as an end in view, and that all you are feeling now is best expressed in the Psalms of David.

4. **Objection** Enthusiastical and unreasonable.
5. **Reply** The very notion of affection implies resting in its object as an end.
6. In perfection happiness must consist not in pursuit, but in enjoyment, satisfaction.
7. Some affections are themselves objects of affection
8. We can imagine goodness greater than any known in experience.

This is a good example of how acting out a conclusion differs from agreeing with the conclusion and need not even presuppose assent. That is, one could in fact be imagining such goodness and having the intended emotional reaction without necessarily being prepared to describe the intensional object as goodness greater than any known in experience.

9. Reaction to a finite creature of complete goodness is awe, reverence, love. And if such a creature is favorable to us, then the higher emotions of friendship.

10. Reaction to such as our guardian and governor.

11. **Question** Should we obey the command to love God "with all our heart"?
Answer Yes.
Proof The almighty God is a being of infinite power and of perfect wisdom and goodness. Thus, based on our natural love for inferior objects, we should love God to the highest degree. To fail to love God fully is to limit one's love irrationally.

Again, analogy is used to advance both intellectual assent and the associated emotional state. By this point it is becoming evident that while there may be such a thing as going to an extreme of reason or of passion, if we remain in the middle ground there is hardly any use for the distinction at all. Certainly it is possible to provide a philosophical analysis of one apart from the other, but an extended discussion of what reason tells us as opposed to what our passional nature tells us on a matter practical significance is likely to be misguided at best and perhaps a gross violation of our nature as persons first and as thinking or feeling beings only at a higher level of abstraction.

Objection The limitation is rational, since God is not the object of our senses as are the other objects of love. (Suggested disanalogy.)
Answer The dissimilarity is irrelevant. In a long passage, Butler argues that the presence of something may affect us even if we do not know of the presence by means of our senses. Our point, not necessarily Butler's, is that we can just as well be affected by a concept in our mind but not in reality as by a concept in our mind and, also.

12. Question Should we obey the command to love "with all our soul and with all our mind"?
Answer Yes.
Proof Assume the natural passions of delight in esteem and aversion to shame. These cannot be passions for esteem from just anyone, or shame before just anyone. We desire the more the esteem of those we respect the more, and we fear the shame of those we respect the more; hence we should desire the approval of God most of all and fear the disapproval of God most of all just on the basis of passions we already have and apart from any special religious affection.

Butler is sometimes described as having naturalized the supernatural, but also as having supernaturalized, or sacramentalized, the natural. For Butler, the appeal to the natural is an appeal to what is fixed, settled, agreed on or given. What is wrong with the charge of a naturalistic fallacy is the notion of fallacy that it presupposes. Butler's argument begins with the

natural because that is what all must accept on pain of being called disingenuous or not of sound mind. From various observations of what seems to be the case, Butler guides the reader in reflection by anticipating and replying to whatever discomfort or hesitation the reader may feel. Butler quite insists on respecting the dignity, the integrity, and the autonomy of those who disagree with him

13. **Question** Is this love of God disinterested?
Answer Yes.
Proof Every affection is disinterested.
Objection God's power over us and our dependence on God ruins the chance of us loving God unselfishly.
Reply The fact is we do not truly love anything if we only want it as a means to some benefit to ourselves. It is that benefit that we truly love.
14. **Conclusion** Not just the love of God (the passion) follows naturally from nature, but also a kind of regard. (a posture, an attitude)

The second sermon now continues with a consideration of these kinds of regard.

Formatted Outline with Commentary: Sermon 14

1. **Question** What religious affections are most suitable to our mortal state of ignorance and imperfection.
2. **Answer** Fear, love, and hope, which constitute resignation and the whole of piety.
. Submission the basis of resignation. Again, we ask, does the reader agree or actually submit?
3. **Question** What are the effects of such resignation?
4. **Question** Is such resignation possible? Rational?

Here Butler anticipates both an intellectual objection and an explanation of why a reader may not have completed the last step.

5. **Definition** Worship = this state of mind in action.

Butler assumes that his readers have some concept of worship, and, of course, in the context of the Rolls Chapel, where these sermons were originally delivered, he could assume his hearers were familiar with the Anglican practice of worship and his readers with some form of Christian worship..

6. **Summary** Resignation suitable to this imperfect state.
7. **Question** What can we hope for?
8. **Sub-question** Does this life satisfy?

Belief that it does is perhaps the most common reason for not progressing to love of God; just as concern that it does not can drive one to worship an object other than God.

Answer to Sub-question No.
Proof Consider the vain round of amusements.

9. **Objection** Absence of sensual appetites implies absence of pleasure.

Reply Consider non-sensual pleasures.

10. **Question** Are natural but non-sensual pleasures possible?
Answer Yes.
Proof Consider the faces of those who experience order, harmony, proportion and beauty in the natural order. These faces manifest approbation, love, delight, and even rapture.
11. **Objection** But still, we experience only effects.
Reply We experience effects only in this world. The creator is superior, but the divine nature may be an object to human understanding.
12. **Proof** (machine example) Goodness a higher object than the effects of goodness.
13. Knowledge by description is inferior to knowledge by acquaintance.
14. **Proof** Joy is more intense with immediate perception, consider the example of the presence of a friend.
15. **Proof** By appeal to the scriptural promise to see God face to face. (For Christians, the promise must be real, but for non-Christians and atheists the promise is still in scripture even if no such God exists.)
16. **Finale** Discussed above.

Summation

What Butler has proposed in these two sermons on the love of God is a path to God that involves doing as much as one can in this world together with the hope of continuing, with better faculties of perception, in the next world. Butler has carefully avoided any claims that might be a problem for those who are not Christians or those who are disinclined to accept claims that go beyond natural reason or that pertain to the supernatural. Finally, and most importantly, Butler has not only told us about this path, but he has also guided us through it.

V. Public Religion

The context of individual belief and practice is the surrounding institutional field, and the context of this field is the function (or use) it serves in the larger social and symbolic structure in which it is embedded.[83] We use the word 'ethics' to refer to how an individual lives, how the moral agent or locus of responsibility carries out or fails to carry out the law of love in relationship to the self, to neighbors, and to God. Butler uses the expressions 'self-love,' love of neighbor,' and 'love of God' repeatedly. The philosophical task here is to define and explain these terms, to clarify the kinds of acts and practices that fall under each category, to provide a deep and persuasive solution to any apparent paradoxes or objections to the way of life being defended, and provide whatever encouragement, clarification, or incentives are needed for people to adopt the way of life presented as in the best interest of all. Butler set himself to this philosophical task in his work as a preacher.

The only sermons by Butler that survive in print or in manuscript are the fifteen sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel, first published in 1726 with revisions and a Preface added in 1729, and the six "Public Sermon" originally preached and published as pamphlets during his tenure as Bishop of Bristol. The six sermons were first collected in 1749. The 1739 sermon concerns foreign missions (as the Durham Charge concerns the domestic mission of the church), the sermons in observance of the Martyrdom of King Charles and in celebration of the accession of King George II. Butler preached these political sermons to the House of Lords in Westminster Abbey. The other three were charity (fundraising) sermons on behalf of the London Hospitals ('spital' is an aphetic form of 'hospital'), the London Charity Schools, and the London Infirmary. The London Infirmary sermon was later reprinted in support of the Newcastle Infirmary, of which Butler, as Bishop of Durham, was the lead financial contributor.

Public Sermons Originally
Published as Pamphlets

- 1739 SPG Sermon. Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at their Anniversary Meeting in the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, February 16.
- 1740 Spital Sermon. Preached before the Right Hon, the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, the Sheriffs, and the Governors of the several Hospitals of the City of London, at the Parish Church of St. Bridget, on Monday in Easter-week.
- 1741 Martyrdom Sermon. Preached before the House of Lords in the Abbey Church of Westminster, January 30.

[83] This book was written at or near the Bishop Butler Study Center in the Burned-Over District of New York State.

- 1745 Charity Schools Sermon. Preached in the Parish Church of Christ Church, London, on May 9, the time of the yearly meeting of the children educated in the Charity Schools in and about the Cities of London and Westminster.
- 1747 Accession Sermon. Preached before the House of Lords, in the Abbey Church of Westminster, June 11, the Anniversary of His Majesty's Happy Accession to the Throne.
- 1748 Infirmary Sermon. Preached before His Grace Charles Duke of Richmond, President, and the Governors of the London Infirmary, for the Relief of Sick and Diseased Persons, especially Manufacturers, and Seamen in Merchant Service, etc., at the Parish Church of St. Lawrence Jewry, on March 31
- 1751 Durham Charge. Delivered to the Clergy at the Primary Visitation of the Diocese of Durham.

The public sermons and the Durham Charge have generally been ignored especially since 1900, but there are some interesting exceptions. Tennant (2011) devotes a full chapter of 30 pages to the public sermons from an antiquarian and analytic point of view. Graeme Hunter (2011) writes on Butler as presenting anti-libertarian arguments, and David McNaughton (2017) includes one of the six public sermons in his edition of Butler' sermons.

Butler's public sermons were intended to raise consciousness, to provide ideological grounding, and to encourage material support for institutions, all prominent in his contemporary field of being. but which he saw as emanations from a single, sacred source. Unlike the *Rolls Sermons* and the *Analogy of Religion*, the public sermons were presented without significant opposition. So, what have they to say to us today? In answer, we have complied a brief catalog of what Butler has had to say about "the other." "The other" is certainly one of the most salient topics in philosophy, religion, and ethics today. He chose to publish only fifteen of what must have been a great many more sermons delivered during his tenure at the Rolls Chapel. None of the unpublished sermons has survived.

Butler lived at a time when the middle classes was beginning to emerge, or at least awareness of the middle was emerging in the literature. By the accident of birth, we are all born into a time and place, a social class, language, and culture. Cultures and religions tend to branch and end up with present day varieties vastly different from each other yet claiming a common root. Butler's entire adult life was spent in the Church of England. Butler understood the world as designed and governed by God, a God who is active and decisive in the redemption of the world. He saw the lives of individuals and of nations as a time of trial, and of testing, a probation both instructive and evaluative regarding all aspects of character, but usually summed up as the practice of virtue and piety, an active and accurate respect for the creator and governor, respect manifesting itself in love for all: self-love, love of neighbor, love of God, and love for nature, all understood as God's creation.[84] Atheists are not expected to engage in the ceremonial aspects of

[84] The KJV of Matthew 22 reads: [**35**] Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,[**36**] Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

religion, but no one with a conscience is excused from the other obligations. The adherent to any of the varieties of this picture, no matter how deep and sincere of conviction, is bound to have questions and concerns.

Butler has collected a conceptual scheme or moral economy using Hebrew, Christian, classical, and medieval sources to create an ensemble he proposes to serve as the guide to life. Grounded in experience, including introspection (now out of favor), but also drawing on hundreds of biblical passages cited by Butler and hundreds of citations to Butler in the OED, as well as an extensive discussion of how to determine the credibility of a witness's testimony. This vast collection of evidence is then arranged as a cumulative case argument all for the purpose of having effect of removing inhibitions to following nature with the aim of restoring the *imago dei* as the best draft, the picture that captivates us This is emanation with a modern, empirical face.

The whole drift or current is individual, responsible practice within a vast system of relations that quickly runs far beyond our ability to calculate. Our judgment is primarily merely probable, but the probable is actionable, rational, sane. Butler uses mentalistic language no longer in favor and sees insanity as the best explanation of the course of history (if his chaplain Tucker can be trusted), but also uses "distracted" as a synonym for "insane." The distracted person is unable to focus on and act in accord with the path laid out by nature and by scripture, which correspond to natural and revealed religion. Thus, the search for the guide to life begins with the experience of living in the natural world and the study of scripture, and search ends with living in accord with nature and scripture. This way of life is endorsed by the conscience and, when considered in the cool hour, is the most likely path to personal happiness. Many of us have inherited a defective image of self-love and end up misguided by what we think is self-love. For Butler and many others, the only reasonable way to understand the perceived and lived moral economy is to understand the natural world and the scripture as created by and governed by God.

If what writers like Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche have told us is true—or even useful—then we must submit to the world so described as indicative of the will of God. All the arts are emanations out of the divine original, and all activity of artists and their audience is governed by the same deity. Social institutions when working properly serve to carry or transmit the narrative of scripture from the origination down to the implications for the present. We are in no position to check the accuracy of scripture, but we have good reason to read scripture canonically. That is, we take the scripture as true and free of error, but we are still left with the determination of the authentic text, of the correct interpretation of that text, and of the intended implications for practice in our lives. Translations matter even for those well-grounded in the ancient languages. Butler cites scripture primarily to illustrate or communicate concepts rather than to prove anything from the authority of an ancient document. Butler especially favored one

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[**37**] Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.[**38**] This is the first and great commandment. [**39**] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.[**40**] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

book, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), which is not in the Anglican canon, but is allowed for instructing the faithful. It is in the canon of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Oriental orthodox churches

Based on observations of ordinary life, Butler claimed that our human nature is ideally suited to deal with the very issues that most concern us, and, frankly, not much else. We are made to question, to doubt, and to inquiry, but not adept at acquiring the very knowledge we seek. Our senses and our reason are adapted to acquire that which it is most important to know; our conscience is defined as the faculty of being able to reflect on our own acts and judge those acts from a moral point of view. Our reason is of two kinds: probable evidence and demonstrative. The distinction is crucial regarding speculation, but out study of ethics and religion is practical—it concerns not how we are to think but how we are to act. We assent to a proposition over all varieties and degrees, but once the proposition is determined to be actionable, common sense requires that we act on it with as much vigor as it we knew the proposition to be certainly true.

All six of the so-called "Public Sermons" and the Charge to the Clergy at Durham have to do with institutions with a religious function, and behind their function is the general function of carrying the Gospel into the world to improve the social and moral order.

Beatus vir qui non abiit, (Psalm 1), appointed for June16, Butler's (and now also Berkeley's) day of commemoration, in the *Book of Common Prayer* used in the UK, the US, and other members of the Anglican Communion.

1
Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, *
nor lingered in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
2
Their delight is in the law of the LORD, *
and they meditate on his law day and night.
3
They are like trees planted by streams of water,
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; *
everything they do shall prosper.
4
It is not so with the wicked; *
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
5
Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, *
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
6
For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, *
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

The polemics of Jordan Peterson in his rejection of identity politics and political correctness may be castles build on sand, but given his vast following of disaffected young men and his academic

credentials, the burden is on us to show the deficiencies of his position. We know that Butler did not trust public sparing as working in the service of truth, and we know the details of Butler's evidence and argumentation are now so far out of date that we cannot look to him for answers.

What we can do, and will do, in what follows is to look at specific remarks in dealing with the other. If the poor are ill, we provide them with medicine. If the poor are ignorant, we educate them. If the people abuse their freedom and become riotous and drunken, we provide just government to control their passions. Such is the attitude of the rich, the powerful, and the privileged. At every turn, those who have the leisure to reflect and make conscientious decisions should inquire regarding what needs to be done for the benefit of all and what lies within their personal power to do. Any mature human should be forever free to answer these questions, and those who do not have the leisure, the ability, or the character to think or act for themselves without being used as means to the ends of another should be offered therapy, education, and moral support. This scheme (one of Butler's most favored words, but without the sinister associations of today's use) outlines the hierarchic structure of Christendom within the great chain of being as understood by Butler.

Christendom no longer exists, so our discussion need not go beyond our commentary on Butler. Our main theme is Butler as a bridge joining ancients, moderns, and future generations in a single, continuous arc (or field) of being. What distinguishes our question from any odd cosmic speculation is that we agree with Butler that philosophy and religion are matters of practice.

The only relevant test of a metaphysical scheme is whether the effect of contemplating it is helpful or distractive in living according to the rule of life, the great commandment. Our reference to living refers, of course, to the entire system of nature understood as sacred. Butler's technique may be understood as the practice of depriving people of the excuses they make for not being with the program of providence, understood non-paternalistically. This is a paternalistic approach which probably was necessary in Butler's day before widespread democracy. Today we need to empower the people, rather than to simply determine what is best for them.

Ethics, which concerns itself with personal merit, and politics, which deals with how we live together and the integrity of the institutions we use for social organization, are obviously related, but the common language used to conduct a philosophical examination should provide for the differences as well as the commonalities. So far, we have followed Butler's use of such terms as virtue and piety since although their connotation has changed it is easier to learn his use than to translate what he intended in the English of 300 years ago. For example, we tend to distinguish between governmental and non-governmental, between church and state, Butler's references to a person's class or station in life are likely to be more precise than would be the use of such language especially in the U.S. today. We therefore propose to discuss the governmental structure of society on analogy with self-control exercised by a person of character.

Anarchic plutocracy refers to a social organization having no moral structure. Everything is for sale, and the rich can buy what they please, perhaps asking to have their purchase wrapped in the language of justice and benevolence.

Conscientious anarchy, by contrast, is an ungoverned social organization relying on the morality of its members. People who are reared up well do not need as adults to be managed or controlled or governed. Conscientious anarchy is the principle of the Catholic Worker movement, of Alcoholics Anonymous, and of the Johnson Family as popularized by William S. Burroughs.

There are countless varieties of authoritarianism. Authoritarian societies are not anarchic since they are governed, perhaps with all the associated trappings of the non-authoritarian. The dictator, tyrant, or hereditary ruler can rule through courts and a legislature as well as my issuing decrees backed up by the military or by developing a cult of personality. Education, which was intended to graduate people of character able and willing to rule themselves fails mainly because the whole educational system, including the civics classes, is taught in an authoritarian manner. The schools, the hospitals, the prisons, the insane asylums, the army, not to mention many churches, have all become total institutions from which escape is almost impossible, and in which most inmates have no desire to escape.

If we eliminate anarchic plutocracy for obvious reasons, declare ourselves anti-authoritarian, while congratulating the authoritarians who go undetected, and acknowledge that conscientious anarchy is too utopian, we are left with the liberal, democratic republic, so called because it respects the liberty of the individual and of free associations of individuals, and conducts the business of government by the election of representatives, often subject to term-limits, recall, or impeachment. Any use of majority rule must provide protection against the tyranny of the majority and the abuse of unpopular individuals and groups.

There are two kinds of liberal, democratic republic, the conservative and the liberal. Conservatives prefer less government. They would like to get as close as possible to the conscientious anarchy, while admitting the extreme is utopian, and, with the educational system in disarray, most graduates are unfit to government themselves. Liberals understand freedom less in terms of the American Bill of Rights and more in terms of government being free to control and conduct the lives of all, providing only that everyone is well fed, well housed, and well clothed. Liberals have no interest in making the world safe for a well-armed cultist who knows how to play the court system. The first three options are impossible, for the reasons stated, but the in-house quarrel between conservatives and liberals who are pledged to the welfare of the democratic republic should have been reared up and educated to settle their differences through research and debate over the implications of the results of that research. The gap between conservatives and liberals in the sense used here can be reduced to a debater over codification of the rule of life. Conservatives stress character over codification. They disclike and distrust codification because codification requires an enforcer, and the power to enforce is easily corrupted. Liberals embrace a paternalistic philosophy of government and are willing to use the power of the police state to impose justice on the people. Such command and control is abhorrent to those who would be free, but, alas, may be needed in the present situation. The point is that where one places oneself on the liberal to conservative spectrum is ripe for study and cool debate.

11 Political Institutions

Critics of religion and of Christianity complain not only about the beliefs and personal practices but rather the institutions, the organized groups and hierarchies that are the face of religion in the world.[85]

Butler understood the institutions ("communities" as he called them) as obviously part of the providential design he was intent on defending. Yet he also recognized that many of the complaints were just. Decay thus becomes the most important concept in his presentation of the dual aspect of religious institutions.

Institutional integrity is a type of congruence between mission (purpose, end) and function or between a body's constitution and the action of its officers. "Trustee" is the expression must commonly use to identify the guardians of institutional integrity. As a preacher at the chapel of the Master of the Rolls (the third highest judge in England), as an employee of the court of King George II and Queen Caroline, and as a bishop of the Church of England (and therefore a member of the House of Lords and thus a national legislator), Butler is perhaps the one philosopher in the western tradition best qualified by personal experience to comment on points that go to the integrity of public institutions, at least since the time of Marcus Aurelius. As prince bishop of Durham, Butler had more political authority than the other bishops over their dioceses.

A problem for the modern reader is Butler's presumption, in the works that most relate to institutional integrity, that his readers share his theological precepts and eighteenth-century British perspectives. In the *Analogy* and in the Rolls Sermons, Butler is usually clear when he intends his comments on morals to be autonomous of theology. Indeed, the whole point of the *Analogy of Religion* is that there is an analogy between natural religion and nature and between revelation and nature. The six public sermons and the charge to the clergy at Durham, however, were addressed to fellow clerics and others who were already declared supporters of the institutions in question. Since Butler is explicitly concerned to answer the objections of secularists and outright atheists, it is no distortion of his intent to present his arguments without resort to premises drawn from a shared theology. Our exposition is faithful to one important strand in the text, but omits to outline some equally important motifs, viz., the theological.

There are at least a dozen texts that come to mind immediately when we ask about Butler's views on institutional integrity, all are practical, i.e., they all address the question of how to maintain institutional integrity especially in times of stress for the institution. In all these texts Butler refers to trying conditions; he often admits the lack of any ideal solution, and in one famous case (insanity) his point seems to be that there is no remedy at all.

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[85] American "nones"—those who identify as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular—are more religious than European nones. The notion that religiously unaffiliated people can be religious at all may seem contradictory, but if you disaffiliate from organized religion it does not necessarily mean you've sworn off belief in God, say, or prayer.
See(www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/american-atheists-religious-european-christians/560936/)

There is hardly anything in Butler's published work that does not bear on institutional integrity in some way, and this for the reason that Butler understood the entire world as a single institution as constituted by God as well as including within it a multiplicity of smaller institutions of various types each of whose individual integrity needed to be respected.

In addition, all of Butler's surviving publications were in some way connected to his career as a churchman. As the following passages show, there was for Butler and for his contemporaries not only an institutional unity of church and state but also a conceptual unity between God's government of the world and the civil government of England. This point is often and understandably lost on the modern reader who knows only the separation of church and state.

> [12] *Lastly,* as by the good providence of God we were born under a free government, and are members of a pure reformed church, both of which he has wonderfully preserved through infinite dangers; if we do not take heed to live like Christians, nor to govern ourselves with decency in those respects in which we are free, we shall be a dishonour to both. Both are most justly to be valued: but they may be valued in the wrong place. It is no more a recommendation of civil, than it is of natural liberty, that it must put us into a capacity of behaving ill. Let us then value our civil constitution, not because it leaves us the power of acting as mere humour and passion carry us, in those respects, in which governments less free lay men under restraints; but for its equal laws, by which the great are disabled from oppressing those below them. Let us transfer, each of us, the equity of this our civil constitution to our whole personal character; and be sure to be as much afraid of subjection to mere arbitrary will and pleasure in ourselves, as to the arbitrary will of others. For the tyranny of our own lawless passions is the nearest and most dangerous of all tyrannies. (SS 1747)

> For we find, all living creatures are brought into the world, and their life in infancy is preserved, by the instrumentality of others; and every satisfaction of it, some way or other, is bestowed by the like means. So that the visible [providential] government, which God exercises over the world, is by the instrumentality and mediation of others. And how far his invisible government be or be not so, it is impossible to determine at all by reason. And the supposition, that part of it is so, appears, to say the least, altogether as credible as the contrary. (AR 2.5.2)

Butler's remarks on the stress various early Hanoverian institutions felt and his descriptions of their shortcomings should not be accepted uncritically as historical evidence just because they seem to be testimony contrary to interest. What we need most to bear in mind is that Butler is making his points in the context of institutions whose constitutions and whose present prospects differ greatly from each other and from what we might want them to be.

The general principle that Butler recurs to again and again in his discussion pertaining to institutional identity is that nothing follows from the fact that an institution falls short, even far

short, of what we think it ought to be. Our part is to carry out the duties of our station in life, to aim so much as possible at producing the greatest benefit, but never be discouraged regardless of the outcomes. Success or failure, he says, should be left to God.

Furthermore, even a corrupt institution may produce good effects. Such an institution may keep in public view texts that are beneficial, and even failing that it may serve as a witness or memorial to that which is good. Because of what he calls "the hurry of the world" it may be difficult to observe the genuine effect some institutions have. Even poorly run institutions may serve to prevent something worse such as people being left without any guidance. Furthermore, it is institutions, even poor ones, that provide for people to engage in united efforts, which may be far more effective than what even the best and wisest of people could product individually.

According to Butler, that one has excess money or power of any kind makes one a trustee and responsible for distribution to those who have not. It is mandatory that the distribution be effected in such a way that it is most likely to reach the proper objects (there is a long discussion of how blame should be determined when people are in need) and will do them the most good. Butler tends to favor provision of services rather than cash and is disinclined to allow the needy much discretion in what services they most need, but his main concern with what would today be called the interface between the rich and the poor. Long ago, servants and poor workers were considered part of the family, but by Butler's time, institutions of mediation between rich and poor were well under way in development, and the need for such paternalism was clear and acknowledged.

In sum, then, trustees must see to it that contributions go to the right recipients, that they are used to the greatest benefit, and that their distribution most conspicuously sets a good example. A deficiency in any of these three areas is so seriously detrimental to the institution that it must be considered a danger to integrity and the trustees must be quick to correct such problems. In general, the greatest benefit results when those who come in needy are raised up to a condition of equality and self-reliance. The proper objects of charity are therefore those who are both in genuine need and who are most likely to benefit from the charity. When the trustees or officers of an institution somehow set a bad example either in how they carry out the duties of their office or in their personal conduct, it is possible they will end up doing more harm than good, even if they deliver services of real value.

Butler defends both personal freedom and social morality, and in both cases his appeal is to practical considerations. We cannot but consider ourselves as agents and originators of actions, even if we are intellectually convinced of some doctrine of necessity. Likewise, we can defend neither immorality nor amorality when put on public view but must cloak vice with alleged righteousness. This, of course, is hypocrisy and makes a mockery of so much of our public professions ("satire" is Butler's word), yet nothing is more common. This insincerity of speech is a serious threat to institutional integrity, even (or especially) when we get in the habit of saying the "right thing" in public without expecting anyone in the audience will take us seriously. "Regulations of long prescription and ancient usage" can be most effective defenders of institutional integrity. All decisions should be evidence-based, but with individuals we have

only consistent habit at best to guide us whereas institutions can maintain rational deliberation as sacrosanct. But again, this will have the desired effect only if the institutional practice goes well beyond precept and profession and carries over well into practice.

Considering the "ruined" condition of this world, much needs reform. The Butlerian reformer will insist on three points. There must first be a precise, clear and specific description of what is wrong with present practice, then an estimation of what can be done to improve it given the resources and knowledge available, and finally the reformers must be acting in accord with the duties of their stations in life.

Conflicts of liberal versus vocational education are not easily resolved. On the one hand, those who enter a vocation must have a deep understanding of the duties of the specific profession, the kind of understanding we associate with a broad and deep liberal education as opposed to training in technical skills. But on the other hand, programs of liberal education that are not constantly measured against objective realities, the way technical skills necessarily are, can easily deteriorate into sophistry and hypocrisy, into skill at saying the "right thing" in public.

If medical, educational, religious, and political institutions are to have any success relative to their respective missions, they must do far more than impress certain beliefs on people, secure agreement with their purposes and accept contributions. These institutions must bring people into a temper and form of behavior that corresponds to the purposes of the institution. **In all cases there will need to be a critical mass of subjects, citizens, or members with critical thinking, reading, and listening skills. Such skills can be acquired as late as middle age and are best learned when the content is of consuming interest. Thus, the semi-literate convicted murderer with time to fill in a prison cell may be coached into becoming an excellent writer when faced with the necessity of doing his own legal work. Thinking, reading, and listening skills must also be adapted to computers and the world wide web if they are to be of use today. In working on this book, we have found that applying one's critical acumen to the cyber world is endless complicated and must continuously be adapted to a fluid communications environment.** They must be active and aggressive in insisting on critical thinking, reading, and listening skills. Confronted with the early reactions to his published sermons but dwelt at some length on the importance of critical reading (see the Preface to the second edition of his *Fifteen Sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel*.)

Butler maintains that when there is disagreement among the administrators or the trustees about serious matters of policy, the dispute should be submitted to the court of public opinion, and the will of the public complied with. His point is that all charitable institutions exist for the public good and are effective specifically as associations or unions only so far as they enjoy the confidence of the public.

Given all these pronouncements, and given the fact that he did accept the See of Durham, it is difficult to believe Butler turned down Canterbury and thus the leadership of the Church., The facts, such as they are known seem to support the legendary nature of this story no matter how often it is told and retold in seemingly reputable sources. Butler was no optimist. To Tucker he observed that there is no remedy when whole nations go mad, and clearly there is an analogy

with institutions. Just as the institution greatly magnifies the good an individual can do even when the institution is seriously defective but retains its integrity as an institution so once the whole institution "goes mad" there is nothing anyone can do by way of remedy.

Even as an Anglican bishop he praised the external religion of Muslims and Roman Catholics. In the extreme case it may be possible for non-living constituents, the art, architecture, and printed texts of an institution, to underwrite its integrity more than the actions of its agents, officers, and trustees.

The Christian apologist cannot disavow those institutions that are continuous with the early Christian communities instituted to continue the mission of Christ. Retreat to some individualistic spirituality may well be a form of religious life, but it has nothing to do with Christianity. Just as Jesus was critical of certain institutions of his day, so the Christians of today must see the institutions of today in a critical light.

Butler insisted the various intellectual and rational faculties are ours to use. They are ours to use in the construction, modification, and criticism of the natural world, of our human nature, of scripture and the creative arts. When we say we are presenting an apology (defense) of the creator's work, we mean that work as understood through the best critical methods available to us.

Conclusion

Butler's attitude regarding the religious institutions recapitulates his general attitude; he could see both sides of any issue, especially as it applies to practice. The general narrative Butler accepted from the start is that of a divine creator who governs the world. This supreme governor intervenes in history in many ways, but especially with the introduction of life and of moral agents such as the human beings. The humans were especially suited to living in community, but neither the individuals nor the whole communities were free of corruption. At the appropriate time, God selected a single people, the Jewish nation, and out of the Jews, he chose a single prophet, Jesus, to be instrumental in the redemption of the world. Much of what happened next happened because the Jews and the Christians were held captive by this picture of their selection by the deity. Modern Jews and Christians may have doubts about the historicity of their divine selection, they may even abandon the faith of their ancestors because of these doubts. What they cannot doubt or deny is that what they think and do today with their lives is deeply conditioned by the narrative of having been chosen that surrounded them at birth and continued to hold their imagination captive. Of course those who entered the world as Christians, Jews, Muslims or whatever by the accident of birth can repudiate all that and go on thinking and living as atheists, but what they cannot do is go back and erase the religious circumstances of their birth, what they cannot deny is the thousands of years it took to develop and produce those circumstances. Nor can they do more than a little to end or change the direction of that narrative.

The Christians of today, of Butler's day, and of the original following assembled by Jesus, are all socially adapted to the same purpose, their business of life. This business is to continue the original mission of Jesus, stated with great clarity in the Bible. What we learn from

Butler is the extreme emphasis on practice, on the living of the mission. The rich should give freely and liberally to the poor for their good as much as for the good of the poor, but just as important and if anything more immediate is that the rich set a good example in what they do with what they own or otherwise control. For Butler, the best way to communicate Jesus' message is by living the life, more than by expounding the doctrine. Preaching the Gospel is a supplement to living the Gospel, not a substitute. Butler was a kind of pragmatist, but he was no anti-intellectual. The best way to communicate the Christian life is to live the life, not talk about it. Our corruption of the original intent requires considerable effort and disciplined use of innate faculties. We live, as Butler and others say, in a ruined world. The institutions as they have come down to us challenge the practice of Christianity, but without the religious institutions we would have no chance of retrieving the original intent.

Butler's adult life was dedicated to the institution of the Anglican Church. He lived with his family until he went away to the dissenting academy kept by Samuel Jones prior to conforming to the established Church of England in the service of which he spent the rest of his life.

12 Social Service Institutions

> When a group of people experience themselves as disadvantaged a state of 'anomie' (Robert Merton) or normlessness can ensue. These disadvantaged groups feel that since society's rewards are not available to them by any legitimate means, neither do the society's notions of what is legitimate apply to them. Consequently, they just go after what they want without consulting any system of rules or values. This mindset and behavior is characteristic of antisocial personality. ~Sheri Heller (https://medium.com/invisible-illness/insanity-in-an-insane-world-c37dd29bad2a)

"Creation is absolutely and entirely out of our depth, and beyond the extent of our utmost reach," Butler says in his sermon on ignorance. (FS 15.5) Butler maintained we can be certain God made the world since it is certain that every effect has a cause. No one doubts, of course, that every *effect* must have a cause. The more controversial question is whether every *event* must have a cause, and there is some guessing involved in the assumption that the world was *created* or that this creation is properly called an *event.* The issue for Butler is not how we are to explain that the world exists as a matter of intellectual or moral curiosity. Rather, the issue is how we are to live in response to the world, our environment, which is the great given of our existence.

As we survey the world, we see much disorder, suffering, and lawlessness. We feel an innate passion in favor of what is right, and an obligation to do whatever we can to improve the moral and material conditions around us. We quickly discern a moral order in ourselves as individuals, in the human communities and institutions formed around us, and in the natural world. There seems no doubt the human institutions are teleological constructions, developed for some purpose. What about our human nature? We, Butler thinks, are moral beings as distinct from animals, or "brutes" as he called them. Our human nature is adapted to virtue. When we follow our consciences, we are following nature, our nature, and we have taken over from the ancients the saying that the life of virtue is best understood as the life of following nature.

Butler enriches this notion with his concept of the supremacy of conscience. In order to follow (our) nature we must first clarify what our nature is. Following Butler we see that the salient point about human nature is that it consists of passions seeking their objects together with the superior principles self-love and benevolence that guide us in the direction of happiness for ourselves and others, and this supreme principle of conscience whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, and to find in favor of the right.

The account in the previous paragraph avoids any reference to God. Butler thought that the moral order described here is a providential order, and that a providential order requires a deity to govern it. (SS.1740.18) At least he seems to think the theistic explanation is the simplest and therefore the most preferable. The atheist presumably has a reason for denying God's existence and therefore can eliminate God as the explanation for the providential order while admitting that God, if he did exist, would be the best explanation. The perceived providential order may be the result of natural selection or may be an illusion of our collective consciousness.

What matters is not the process by which the providential order was produced; what matters is how we read the perceived order and how that reading serves as a guide to life. What determines the outcome is our ability to read the experience. A good reading (of anything) need not be a reading of the author's intent, but neither can a good reading be idiosyncratic. There must be a strong social aspect. There is no such thing as a private language. We are not denying that a person can be home alone and do a good reading. The point is that the entire process of reading must be open to public inspection and critical inquiry. Those who seek the guide to life as the Holy Grail of philosophy are effectively seeking the root metaphor embedded in the body of evidence under examination.

For the theist all experiences, all possible evidence, are relevant to the construction of the argument in the form of a cumulative case. The theist (in the definition used by Butler) believes in a single benevolent designer and governor of the world. Therefore, in order to read the order of providence the theist must be able to see all things as from God, or at least as certainly not from God.

Introduction to Providence

> *… and so make one pervading ambiguity the only possible explanation for all the ambiguous details.*
>
> Melville, Pierre: Or, The Ambiguities, (xv.ii)

In developing his concept of providence, Butler uses three elements: (1) that the world is a single system, (2) that the world is governed by a deity, and (3) that some created beings are capable of independent or autonomous actions for which they are responsible. Since the governor is all powerful, we expect that all will work out for the best as intended by the deity, but part of the deity's intention was that the independent beings would exercise their moral freedom and accept the consequences for their actions.

> [14] Whoever thinks it worth while to consider this matter thoroughly, should begin with stating to himself exactly the idea of a system, oeconomy or constitution of any particular nature, or particular any thing: and he will, I suppose, find, that 'tis an one or a whole, made up of several parts; but yet, that the several parts even considered as a whole, do not compleat the idea, unless in the notion of a whole, you include the relations and respects, which those parts have to each other. Every work both of nature and of art is a system: and as every particular thing both natural and artificial is for some use or purpose out of and beyond itself, one may add, to what was already brought into the idea of a system, its conduciveness to this one or more ends. Let us instance in a watch—suppose the several parts of it taken to pieces, and placed apart from each other: let a man have ever so exact a notion of these several parts, unless he considers the respects and relations which they have to each other, he will not have any thing like the idea of a watch. Suppose these

> several parts brought together and any how united: neither will he yet, be the union ever so close, have an idea which will bear any resemblance to that of a watch. But let him view those several parts together, or consider them as to be put together in the manner of a watch; let him form a notion of the relations which those several parts have to each other—all conducive in their respective ways to this purpose, shewing the hour of the day; and then he has the idea of a watch. Thus it is with regard to the inward frame of man. Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection, considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system or constitution of this nature: because the constitution is formed by somewhat not yet taken into consideration, namely by the relations, which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience. 'Tis from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and above all the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of humane nature. And from the idea itself 'twill as fully appear, that this our nature, *i.e.* constitution is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears, that its nature, *i.e.* constitution or system is adapted to measure time. What in fact or event commonly happens, is nothing to this question. Every work of art is apt to be out of order: but this is so far from being according to its system, that let the disorder increase, and 'twill totally destroy it. This is merely by way of explanation what an oeconomy, system or constitution is. And thus far the cases are perfectly parallel. If we go further, there is indeed a difference, nothing to the present purpose, but too important an one ever to be omitted. A machine is inanimate and passive: but we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power. We are charged with it: and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it. (FS Pref 14)

Our main question in this book is whether this scheme, maintained by a great many Christians as well as by Butler, is credible as a way of life. Besides the voice of conscience, God has provided in Christ a single, high, eminent, and special mediator, and other mediational beings for good or ill, the angels and the demons (fallen angels)

The highest level of order, organization, and governance is represented by God, the governor of nature. Both the constitution of the natural world and the constitution of human nature constitute the providential design and the teleological scheme that provides us with the final causes of all things.

The dispensation of providence is the government of God (AR.1.1.8). The end of this providential design is the most virtue and happiness possible (AR.intro.10), and it functions to carry out these ends (FS.1.7). The wisdom of providence is such that it is able to bring good out of evil (FS.9.11), but even the wisest of us has little comprehension of the workings of providence (FS.15.4). It falls to us, as part of our trial in this life, to carry of the tasks entrusted

to us, that is, to change the things we can change and that we see need to be changed. Butler provides an extensive description of living under a providential scheme of which we know so little. In Butler's usage to call the dispensation of providence "probable" does not mean it is more likely than not, but only that it is actionable even if less than an even chance. We know that Butler had some familiarity with Pascal's apologetic even though he does not mention Pascal in his published works and his argument bears only a family resemblance to Pascal's. We may also consider an analogue from college teaching. At a time when there is so much interest in moving classes online, might it not be reasonable to consider a non-authoritarian alternative? (1) There is a syllabus mapping of topics to calendar dates and giving readings or other activities to be carried out in relation to the topics. (2) Students are told only to work though the assignments on the syllabus and then design the class meeting by asking two questions: Given the arc of the course so far, what would be most beneficial for the class to do today? What power do I have to bring about what I believe would be most beneficial? (3) If the students insist that they have no idea what is expected of them, the answer is that they should pursue the assignments and design the class session as would a person of good will and common sense. This method of instruction may be transferred directly to the whole of life. The citizen of the world begins each day by asking what, from the point of view of good will and common sense, needs to be done, and to what extent this citizen of the world is empowered to bring these things about.

THE OTHER

Butler invokes various divisions of humanity: Christians and non-Christians. Besides Anglicans, he recognized Christian groups such as Catholics and Protestants, and non-Christians including Jews, Muslins, and classical pagans. He, like most of his contemporaries, made much of the distinction between ancients and moderns. He insisted on the full humanity of the slaves in the British colonies but seems content to adopt a passive role regarding the manifest economic injustice. We do not doubt Butler was captive of the linguistic and thought forms of his time and place, But we think it worthwhile to sketch the extent to which he and his commentators extended the roots and branches of the Butler trunk.

Animals

Given his precept that virtue consists in following nature, Butler infers that animals ("brutes") were absolved of any vice they might seem to commit since in simply following their instincts they were following their nature. (FS Pref.22) Referring to those who see the possible immortality of the animals as an objection to Butler's views, he answers that there is nothing disagreeable about animal immorality and nothing suspect about any creature developing capabilities that were previously latent.(AR 1.16) Nor is there anything in the Bible that counts against the afterlife of animals. Personification is used in the written and the spoken language both to bring God down to the human level and to raise the animals up to the human.

Atheists

A particular concern of Butler's was to emphasize the degree to which his arguments went through even for those, such as atheists, who disagreed with one of his premises. Thus, he points to an asymmetry in thinking about a future life. If religion is true, then there must be a future life, and therefore if there is no future life, religion must be false. But atheism does not require that there be no future life. Atheism is compatible with a future life or no future life. Therefore, Butler's arguments on the future life, if successful, will apply to atheists and well as all varieties of theist.

> [24] This credibility of a future life, which has been here insisted upon, how little soever it may satisfy our curiosity, seems to answer all the purposes of religion, in like manner as a demonstrative proof would. Indeed, a proof, even a demonstrative one, of a future life, would not be a proof of religion. For, that we are to live hereafter, is just as reconciliable with the scheme **of atheism**, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive is; and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from that scheme, that there can be no future state. But as religion implies a future state, any presumption against such a state is a presumption against religion. (AR.1.1.24)

> [14] Reflections of this kind are not without their terrors to serious persons, the most free from enthusiasm, and of the greatest strength of mind; but it is fit things be stated and considered as they really are. And there is, in the present age, a certain fearlessness with regard to what may be hereafter under the government of God, which nothing but an universally acknowledged demonstration on the side of **atheism** can justify, and which makes it quite necessary that men be reminded, and, if possible, made to feel, that there is no sort of ground for being thus presumptuous, even upon the most sceptical principles (AR 1.2.14)

Again, Butler argues that the atheistic position seems to carry with it dangers or risks but has no benefits at least as far as the ethical mandate is concerned.

> [17] From these things likewise we may learn in what sense to understand that general assertion, that the opinion of necessity is essentially destructive of all religion. First, in a practical sense; that by this notion **atheistical** men pretend to satisfy and encourage themselves in vice, and justify to others their disregard to all religion. (AR.1.6.17)

But also, Butler insists on the moral necessity of a state church or the establishment of religion on the grounds that without such a public religion people will forget God. Butler was willing to be

tolerant and allow religions other than the Church of England; his target here is atheists, those who have no such possibility.

> [15] To conclude: **atheistical** immorality and profaneness, surely, is not better in itself, nor less contrary to the design of revelation, than superstition. Nor is superstition the distinguishing vice of the present age, either at home or abroad. But if our colonies abroad are left without a publick religion, and the means of instruction, what can be expected, but that, from living in a continued forgetfulness of God, they will at length cease to believe in him; and so sink into stupid **atheism?**

Catholics.

Butler wrote against "popery," but he also had sympathies for the Catholic forms of worship, and after his death he was accused of having become a Catholic. The accusation fizzled, but in the early 19th century Butler was popular among Tractarians and Anglican converts to Catholicism, preeminently John Henry Newman. Butler was also studied extensively by the Jesuit scholar, Albino Babolin (1969, 1970, 1971), who translated Butler's complete works into Italian.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18), certainly, but what is the rule of life, the meta-vision, that guides the formation of the vision? How does one attain the breath of vision needed to avoid living a life more hypocritical, narrow, and constricted than open, connected, and emphatic?

For Butler the root problem of western philosophy was to discover how to move from a philosophical theism, a religion based on natural theology, to a fully participatory life in that state of religion, graciously accepting the various accommodations that God has set out for us: nature, art, conscience and scripture. Nature, scripture, art, science, and our phenomenal experience of human nature manifested in the acts and whole way of life of ourselves and of others, are all so many texts. The challenge is to recover not only the text but also its context in artifact and in the oral tradition. The oral tradition is ephemeral but continues with a life of its own among those who relish the texts and their associated artifacts, architecture, and performances. These texts in context however closely conserved and considered by specialists yield us nothing but entertainment unless and until we can grasp the thought expressed.

"Sir, I do not profess to be an admirer, nor am I qualified to be the apologist, of certain doctrines which have fallen under the castigation of the noble Lord; but when I remember that Bishop Butler, because he adopted certain visible signs in his religion, and addressed his clergy of the diocese of Durham, in 1751, for the revival of obsolete services, and upon the necessity of external religion, feeling that the compound nature of mind and body required a double appeal to the intellect and senses—when I remember that this eminent man, the powerful champion of revealed religion, was branded as a Papist, I think the Tractarians can afford to have those imputations cast upon them, and to suffer in company with such a man as the author of the *Analogy*"[86]

[86] Mr. Hobhouse, House of Commons, 25 March 1857.

Dissenters. Butler was born into a Dissenting family and attending a Dissenting Academy. The variety of Presbyterianism that Butler came to by the accident of birth was in an advanced state of decay in the early 18th century. Butler concluded he could better serve his divine vocation by conforming to the Church of England, and he managed, we are told, to convince his family and the elders that conversion to the established church was the right thing for him to do. He apparently remained on good terms with his family.

Insane. Josiah Tucker (1775, 1782), Butler's chaplain, tells us, in one of the most famous anecdotes: His custom was, when at Bristol, to walk for hours in his garden in the darkest night which the time of the year could afford, and I had frequently the honour to attend him. After walking some time, he would stop suddenly and ask the question, "What security is there against the insanity of individuals? The physicians know of none; and as to divines, we have no data, either from Scriptures or from reason, to go upon relative to this affair" .He would then take another turn, and then stop short: "Why might not whole communities and public bodies be seized with fits of insanity, as well as individuals! Nothing but this principle, that they are liable to insanity, can account for the major part of those transactions of which we read in history. Do we really know how typical or untypical this sentiment was in Butler's time? Do we know that he referred to Methodist movement in Anglican Church as an insane community? Is it fair for us to consider this passage in relation to Butler studies or is it more properly related to Josiah Tucker studies? This thought does not correspond to any passage in Butler, although he does appeal to insanity("distraction") in attempting to reduce an opponent's position to absurdity. Tucker told the story at least several times and locating all the instances is a challenge since Tucker's works have not been indexed. Edgar Allan Poe gives his version, along with some comments in his "Marginalia" in the *Democratic Review* (1844):The Bishop of Durham (Dr. Butler) once asked Dean Tucker whether he did not think that communities went mad *en masse*, now and then, just as individuals, individually. The thing need not have been questioned. Were not the Abderian seized, all at once, with the Euripides lunacy, during which they ran about the streets declaiming the plays of the poet? And now here is the great Tweedle-dee Tweedledum paroxysm — the uproar about Pusey. If England and America are not lunatic now — at this very moment — then I have never seen such a thing as a March hare. An innocent reader may wonder whether a passage such as this really does provide context or whether it might better be considered a curiosity. One cannot follow every lead in every direction. The laws of natural selection apply to religious research as much as anything. In this case the key is to find in the secondary literature on Poe a significant analysis and evaluation of how they are related. The key text in this case seems to be Robert D. Jacobs on the New Critics, where he argues that what Butler, whom he refers to as one of the "harried divines," tried to do becomes extremely interesting in relation to Poe's use of the words "gradation" and "analogy." So, mapping the context of Butler's work down through time becomes wonderful entertainment.

Slaves. Butler's most extended comment on the slaves is in the sermon on missions:

> Of these our colonies, the slaves ought to be considered as inferior members, and therefore to be treated as members of them; and not merely as cattle or goods, the property of their masters. Nor can the highest property, possible to be acquired in these servants, cancel the obligation to take care of their religious instruction. Despicable as they may appear in our eyes, they are the creatures of God, and of the race of mankind, for whom Christ died: and it is inexcusable to keep them in ignorance of the end for which they were made, and the means whereby they may become partakers of the general redemption. On the contrary, if the necessity of the case requires, that they may be treated with the very utmost rigour, that humanity will at all permit, as they certainly are; and, for our advantage, made as miserable as they well can be in the present world; this surely heightens, our obligation to put them into as advantageous a situation as we are able, with regard to another. (SS 1.8)

Butler is certainly progressive in his views on the humanity and the entitlements of the slaves, but he may be letting himself off easy with regard to the evil of the institution of slavery. The problem is stated clearly by Stephen Thompson in the SEP article on Alexander Crummell an early nineteenth century, African-American Episcopal Priest .

> It is hard to read Crummell and not recall the problem of evil that haunts providential philosophies of history. If history unfolds as God sees fit, then why do such devastating historical wrongs as American slavery occur? It seems that either God is *unable* to prevent such wrongs (but isn't God all-powerful?), God is *unaware* that they are occurring (but isn't God all-knowing?), or that God is *unwilling* to stop such wrongs (but isn't God all-good?). None of those options is available to the providential philosopher of history, since if God lacked any one of those traits then he cannot be the God that drives history. Instead, he would be as we are, characters trying to impact the course of history.

The previous versions may have been perfect as befits anything from the creator, but they were still accommodated to the times, places, and purposes of the past. Thus,

> it is not surprising that Bishop Butler, the preeminent Anglican moral theologian of the eighteenth century, provided a primary resource for [Alexander] Crummell as he formed his own distinctive moral theology. Not content merely to appropriate certain aspects of Butler's moral theology, Crummell extends and recasts Butler's theory. … Butler's moral theology is individualistic, a-historical, and aristocratic, Crummell's by contrast, is associational, historical and democratic. While Crummell appropriates certain notions that are integral to Butler's moral theology,

> he explodes Butler's easy rationalizations of the social and political order of eighteenth-century England.[87]

Crummell presents us with a creative use of Butler's work. An Episcopal priest and intellectual, Crummell as born in 1819. Subjected to racial discrimination in the US, Crummell became a missionary to Africa.

OTHER-ORIENTED REACTIONS TO BUTLER

Asian Indians. South India Christian School Book Society. *Principles of Moral Science containing Bishop Butler's three sermons on human nature, and dissertation on virtue, with an introduction, analysis, vocabulary, etc., by the Rev. Henry Bower*. Madras: South India Christian School Book Society, 1857. 2 pts. Text in English and Tamil. 118 p., with.an introduction and glossary in Tamil, with some Telugu, by Rev. Henry Bower, and colophons in English. Translated into Tamil from the English original; includes parallel title pages in English and Tamil" Regarding the study of university curriculum see Ellen E McDonald, op cit, pp 453-70; Gauri Viswanathan, Ibid; and Aravind Ganachari, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar - The Secular Rationalist Reformer, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 2005, pp 67-86;

> This was achieved through the compulsory reading of Intuitionists such as Bishop Butler' *Analogy* and *Sermons*, William Paley's *Principles of Moral Philosophy* and *Natural Theology*, and Richard Whatley's treatise on *Rhetoric and Logic*. Though Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* was not a prescribed text, nobody could avoid its reading. Besides these were the sound protestant Bible principles in Shakespeare's dramas such as Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and Othello; the "scriptural morality" of Francis Bacon in his *Essays* and *Advancement of Learning*, as well as Locke's *On Toleration*; "the strain of serious piety" in Joseph Addison's *Spectator Papers* and Johnson's Lives of Milton and Addison; "noble Christian sentiments" in Adam Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. The selection of Bacon's *Novum Organon* was intended to show that Indian literature was devoid of experimental science or natural philosophy. The teaching of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was a surreptitious way of teaching Christianity ~ Aravind Ganachari

Gandhi. The section of Gandhi's *Autobiography* that mentions Butler is nuanced and should be considered in context.

> The next day at one o'clock I went to Mr. Baker's prayer-meeting. There I was introduced to Miss Harris, Miss Gabb, Mr. Coates and others. Everyone kneeled down to pray and I followed suit. The prayers were supplications to God

[87] "Alexander Crummell's Transformation of Bishop Butler's Ethics." Charles H. Reynolds and Riggins R. Earl Jr. *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall, 1978), pp. 221-239, p.

for various things, according to each person's desire. Thus the usual forms were for the day to be passed peacefully, or for God to open the doors of the heart.

A prayer was now added for my welfare: 'Lord, show the path to the new brother who has come amongst us. Give him, Lord, the peace that Thou hast given us. May the Lord Jesus who has saved us save him too. We ask all this in the name of Jesus.' There was no singing of hymns or other music at these meetings. After the supplication for something special every day, we dispersed, each going to his lunch, that being the hour for it. The prayer did not take more than five minutes.

The Misses Harris and Gabb were both elderly maiden ladies. Mr. Coates was a Quaker. The two ladies lived together, and they gave me a standing invitation to four o'clock tea at their house every Sunday.

When we met on Sundays, I used to give Mr. Coates my religious diary for the week and discuss with him the books I had read and the impression they had left on me. The ladies used to narrate their sweet experiences and talk about the peace they had found.

Mr. Coates was a frank-hearted staunch young man. We went out for walks together, and he also took me to other Christian friends.

As we came closer to each other, he began to give me books of his own choice, until my shelf was filled with them. He loaded me with books, as it were. In pure faith I consented to read all those books, and as I went on reading them we discussed them.

I read a number of such books in 1893. I do not remember the names of them all, but they included the Commentary of Dr. Parker of the City Temple, Pearson's *Many Infallible Proofs*, and Butler's *Analogy*. Parts of these were unintelligible to me. I liked some things in them, while I did not like others. *Many Infallible Proofs* were proofs in support of the religion of the Bible, as the author understood it. The book had no effect on me. Parker's Commentary was morally stimulating, but it could not be of any help to one who had no faith in the prevalent Christian beliefs. Butler's *Analogy* struck me to be a very profound and difficult book, which should be read four or five times to be understood properly. It seemed to me to be written with a view to converting atheists to theism. The arguments advanced in it regarding the existence of God were unnecessary for me, as I had then passed the stage of unbelief; but the arguments in proof of Jesus being the only incarnation of God and the Mediator between God and man left me unmoved.

But Mr. Coates was not the man easily to accept defeat. He had great affection for me. He saw, round my neck, the Vaishnava necklace of Tulsi-beads. He thought it to be superstition and was pained by it. 'This superstition does not become you. Come, let me break the necklace.'

'No, you will not. It is a sacred gift from my mother.'

'But do you believe in it?'

'I do not know its mysterious significance. I do not think I should come to harm if I did not wear it. But I cannot, without sufficient reason, give up a necklace that she put round my neck out of love and in the conviction that it would be conducive to my welfare. When, with the passage of time, it wears away and breaks of its own accord, I shall have no desire to get a new one. But this necklace cannot be broken.'

Mr. Coates could not appreciate my argument, as he had no regard for my religion. He was looking forward to delivering me from the abyss of ignorance. He wanted to convince me that, no matter whether there was some truth in other religions, salvation was impossible for me unless I accepted Christianity which represented the truth, and that my sins would not be washed away except by the intercession of Jesus, and that all good works were useless.

Just as he introduced me to several books, he introduced me to several friends whom he regarded as staunch Christians. One of these introductions was to a family which belonged to the Plymouth Brethren, a Christian sect.

Many of the contacts for which Mr. Coates was responsible were good. Most struck me as being God-fearing. But during my contact with this family, one of the Plymouth Brethren confronted me with an argument for which I was not prepared:

'You cannot understand the beauty of our religion. From what you say it appears that you must be brooding over your transgressions every moment of your life, always mending them and atoning for them. How can this ceaseless cycle of action bring you redemption? You can never have peace. You admit that we are all sinners. Now look at the perfection of our belief. Our attempts at improvement and atonement are futile. And yet redemption we must have. How can we bear the burden of sin? We can but throw it on Jesus. He is the only sinless Son of God. It is His word that those who believe in Him shall have everlasting life. Therein lies God's infinite mercy. And as we believe in the atonement of Jesus, our own sins do not bind us. Sin we must. It is impossible to live in this world sinless. And therefore Jesus suffered and atoned for all the sins of mankind. Only he who accepts His great redemption can have eternal peace. Think what a life of restlessness is yours, and what a promise of peace we have.'

The argument utterly failed to convince me. I humbly replied:

'If this be the Christianity acknowledged by all Christians, I cannot accept it. I do not seek redemption from the consequences of my sin. I seek to be redeemed from sin itself, or rather from the very thought of sin. Until I have attained that end, I shall be content to be restless.'

To which the Plymouth Brother rejoined: I assure you, your attempt is fruitless. Think again over what I have said.'

> And the Brother proved as good as his word. He knowingly committed transgressions and showed me that he was undisturbed by the thought of them.
>
> But I already knew before meeting with these friends that all Christians did not believe in such a theory of atonement. Mr. Coates himself walked in the fear of God. His heart was pure, and he believed in the possibility of self-purification. The two ladies also shared this belief. Some of the books that came into my hands were full of devotion. So, although Mr. Coates was very much disturbed by this latest experience of mine, I was able to reassure him and tell him that the distorted belief of a Plymouth Brother could not prejudice me against Christianity.
>
> My difficulties lay elsewhere. They were with regard to the Bible and its accepted interpretation.

In his interpretation of the *Gita*, Gandhi mentions an anecdote about Bishop Butler. The story is that Butler took a pledge never to enter religious controversy. When an atheist showed up, Butler declined to engage. Clearly, Butler's concern was not being able to reply to the atheist "in the instant"; he made it his business to reply in writing at his leisure. Likewise, Gandhi does not want to dispute the meaning of the Shastras.

Summation

The rule of life we have sought is a management technique. The temptation is to give more time and attention to that aspect of one's activity that is not working as well as hoped, and to keep hands off those aspects that exceed expectations. Our rule is the opposite: underperforming activities are terminated, successful ventures are expanded and intensified, at least until they disappoint.

Chapter 13 Religious Institutions[88]

If Butler's life and work was a milestone in the development of pastoral philosophy—the adaptation of philosophy to serve the practical end of living well—he was also a link from Stoics and Epicureans in classical times to post-Freudians like Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Albert Ellis. This represents another turning point, a critical fork, in the history of therapy. Erich Fromm's critique of Freud's performance and his legacy, as opposed to his mission, is strongly negative. Fromm believes in the mission of Freud but is critical of how Freud and his followers carried out the mission. Fromm seems to entertain in his book on Freud's mission and in his work the apocalyptic notion that men and women of good will should go to any lengths that the mission be accomplished.

Fear of embarrassment varies greatly, of course, and there are those who seem to thrive on embarrassing themselves and their audience. Philosophers in training are often taught simply to take their lumps and forget it. Do not worry about making an ass of yourself, do not blush, don't prolong the agony. Admittedly, it is also wise to follow Thoreau's advice and live on a wide margin. As one develops one's various venues of choice for the presentation of self, it is advisable both to make embarrassment highly unlikely and to arrange things so that the harm done, should it occur are minimized. What one does not do is allow unconscious repression of any significant element or passion in one's underlying nature.

We naturally try to develop a personal audience or *entourage* that is most satisfying, but the standard philosophical point is that those who are easily pleased by our performances initially may not be the ones whose attendance (presence) gives most satisfaction in the end. Some bosses are so insecure that they need to surround themselves with "yes men," but such a policy always carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. Most of us derive greater satisfaction from being torn apart by a senior colleague who has taken the time to reply to a piece than from ten or twenty friends and fans telling us how much they enjoyed it. The first principle in the development of one's philosophical *entourage* must always be that these are the people who will be most critical and least easily pleased with one's performance.

Regardless of how one develops the philosophical *entourage* (or interpretive community as Stanley Fish would have us say), the only absolute essential is that true self-expression be cultivated but cultivated without leaving the venue. "Something a bit different. but awesome, but still in the venue. Why is this such a difficult concept?" As this process becomes institutionalized in a culture, full, fair, and free expression becomes the norm, and all can contribute his or her unique angle of vision on any subject. Contrary to popular opinion, but in line with Wittgenstein's thoughts, the members of the groups here need not have anything in common, they need not be aware even of what language game is being played. It is not only the clueless, but the best-informed as well, who are left shaking their heads and wondering at the true nature of the transaction of which they find themselves a party. The public value of the process

[88] Some of this material was presented in a different form at the Northwest Popular Culture Association, October 27, 2012.

described here is that the public opinion, the fog or chaos of opinions that results is most reflective of the present state of our collective knowledge of the real.

In the system described here, every person, even every encounter or intervention, every analysis, is different. The specialists develop an eye not only for difference but for specific differences that matter most. Lines of poetry are rewritten 10s or 100s of times. Hypothesizes are discarded by the score as falsifying evidence comes in. Subscriptions are cancelled, and books acquired at considerable cost and inconvenience go unread as more important matters press in. Stereotypes and generalities, all the racisms, fall away as useless for any purpose. The unbiased mind that knows individuals by name is what Walter Lippmann called lucid and is highly resistant to what Lippmann called the manufacture of consent.

The society Freud envisaged can be seen as an answer to Dewey's call for a common faith and for art to be seen as experience both explicit and militant, while Freud's insistence on the reign of scientific reason (the reality principle) binds his method both to the great mystics, who also made truth the business of their lives, and to the great quotidian-cosmological philosophers who taught not so much which of our daily acts are in accord with the will of heaven as how to discover for ourselves the way of life which love of God has blessed, the way of life that best instantiates participation in the forms.

Analytic philosophy and psychoanalysis are not related in any interesting way, and Wittgenstein for one was censorious of those who described his method as a form of therapy. Philosophical analysis and psychoanalysis are different treatments for the ills of our human nature in our human condition, and when they work, if they work, they can induce the same state of healthy-mindedness, which, as we have emphasized, is essentially different in every case. Wittgenstein did suggest an analogy between philosophy and therapy, and cognitive therapy sits on the borderline of philosophy and psychology**.**

The foundational platonic point was that if we want to feel good and be good then we cannot leave everything to the free play of the passions but must order and arrange the passions with special attention to the self-regarding and the other-regarding, and we must find a way for the best that is in us, the reason, to also be the most powerful. Material from the preconscious and the unconscious appears in many forms: errors, omissions, dreams, hallucinations, delusions, psychoanalytic sessions, as well as many more cases of sublimated appearance.

When our conscious life is so full of stress, anxiety, and insecurity, it becomes even more difficult for reason/conscience to gain ascendancy over the passions. However, if there is a coincidence between lives that pursue self-love and lives that pursue benevolence, then we have a strong incentive to gain as much acquaintance with reality as we can. The controlled release of unconscious passions requires both a formation of public opinion that is friendly to such expression rather than hostile to it, and the discipline and sophistication, the breadth of experience and the courage to act under uncertainty that can be found only in those with many years of professional training.

The alliance of popular and professional philosophy has little to do with the use of textbooks and videos to present philosophy to the people; its concern is with finding a way to

extend the public's attention span, be willing to feel intellectual gratification, and be willing to defer that intellectual gratification in pursuit of an even grander and more pleasant vision, even on to Bertrand Russell's claim that those who have persisted in their philosophical studies may attain the human's greatest good: union with the universe.

Bertrand Russell ended *The Problems of Philosophy* with the remark that the "unalloyed search for truth" makes us "citizens of the universe." He went on to say that "through the study of the universe, which philosophy contemplates, the mind is also rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good." How important is it in one's life as a whole to give such prominence to the search for truth, when there is little expectation of finding a satisfactory rendition of it, and when one is more likely to fall into conflict with those who do not share the same truth-priority? Is there such a thing as a private truth, or must the truth be vested by social institutions and, if so, how can we have any hope of a world culture of philosophy, such as envisioned by UNESCO, of which we should all be citizens, let alone the universal citizenship spoken of by Russell in The Value of Philosophy? See her testimony at http://www.skepdic.com/russell.html to read the full chapter.

Butler was especially concerned not just with how the rich treated the poor, but also with the kind of example they set. An institution that has not maintained its integrity may do more harm than good even if large sums are contributed with genuine generosity. So, for example, an institution dedicated to education needs not only to present to students lessons that are appropriate but even more importantly needs to present the students with a consistent program of acquaintance with those who exemplify the whole scholarly way of life, those who actually moderate their own beliefs according to the evidence rather than according to vested interest or whim. And of course, Butler is best known for his critique of the sharp distinction between interested and disinterested institutions.

Institutions as Enactment and Performance, of the Narrative

Butler understood the natural world and its inhabitants as a project, as a goal directed process. He understood his personal work as a series of subprojects all aiming at helping people to see the larger project as it is, that is, as a probation, trial, test, the living of which serves to prepare us for a higher form of life. Butler presents many arguments to clear objects which people have used as excuses for failing to adopt Butler's version of reality. Butler is insistent that his version of reality is not some private, personal, or sectarian vision, but well within the mainstream of a widely accepted narrative of the history of the world. Butler makes some attempt to deal with those outside this most favored narrative, but we do not pretend this attempt is altogether satisfactory.

Butler does not explain the phrase **light of nature** because it was widely used by all the Anglican and dissenting divines. The received view was that the light of nature included the God-given faculties of the senses and the reasoning powers and was contrasted with the light of scripture or the light of grace.

For the scholastic doctors, this light of nature was used to help us understand faith, but for Enlightened thinkers, reason was also used to test and evaluate the claims of faith. On the orthodox view, the light of nature was used to establish the claims of natural religion, to judge the credentials of an alleged revelation, and, with regard to what is accepted as scripture, to interpret the text and derive just inferences from it.

Part Two of the *Analogy* is considered a refutation of the deists not because Butler disproved the first principles of deism, but rather because he accepted those principles and then, in lawyerly fashion, went on to use those very principles to get the whole of the church's scripture admitted into evidence, so to speak, in this great deliberation on the conduct of life. See, for example, Isaac Watts, *Logick* (1725), part two. As used here, **supernatural instruction** is the scripture revelation, and therefore distinct from any sort of superstition and from any alleged private inspiration.

The following is an extract from modern scholarship on Butler. The author ignores the fact that Butler was hardly mentioned in relation to deism prior to the twentieth century.

> Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1736) is more or less unanimously credited with finally defeating deism, that relentlessly dangerous foe of the Anglican Church. But, as we now know, Butler's sharp and learned logic of course only disemboweled a very modern fiction. Or did it? For there is no doubt that the Church and Bishop Butler were indeed understood by some contemporaries to be battling a mighty deist movement. Some modern commentators have even argued that 'the Evangelical movement came as a reaction to the Deists'. Perhaps Anglicanism really was subject to the point of an antichristian bayonet only manfully thrust aside by Butler? Or was it all a scam, a fiction playing on the hearts and minds of the faithful in order to encourage loyalty and bring waverers back to the fold? Eighteenth-century protagonists were just as interested in constructing in the minds of others their own preferred reality for their own ends as many twentieth-century historians have been to construct the history of modernity. The historical record, then, will provide us with some data and vast gaps, but it also provides us with sophisticated projections of how certain eighteenth century minds perceived their reality according to their own ideological outlook. Thus, for many churchmen, conservative thinkers and others, the deist movement certainly did exist, and self-evidently so. On the other hand, we know that Jansenists and Jansenist supporters undoubtedly existed in some considerable numbers in France (especially in Paris), yet in practice they have to be carefully sought for in the historical record because they habitually denied their own existence.
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> ***
>
> The dominant explanation for the decline of English deism amongst historians today remains more or less that of Cragg: 'Bishop Butler's monumental work, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* [1736], was the most formidable and the most decisive work that the deist controversy called forth. On essential matters it virtually ended the debate;

skirmishing continued for some years, but it was clear that the fundamental issues had been settled.'60 Amongst the few recent historians who significantly diverge from the Butler-triumphant explanation is Roy Porter and his 'laicization' thesis. We have seen already that Porter argues for a conservative English Enlightenment, yet one populated with numerous radical deists who were 'novel, incisive and influential'. On the decline of deism, he argues that the deists were less read later in the century because they had already achieved their aims and that 'threats to a gentleman's privilege of being religious on his own terms' from High Churchmen and other enthusiasts 'had been resisted, had withered away or were becoming marginalized to the "lunatic fringe"'. Crucially, 'legislation won toleration for Protestants' when Convocation was prorogued in 1717. The problem here is the difficulty of reconciling this account with those of historians who, as we have seen, argue that the crescendo of the supposed deist movement in terms of numbers and influence occurred in the 1730s. Given that there is little evidence that the deist movement ever existed, debate on the chronology of its victory or defeat is of no great consequence except in one respect, for Porter's 'victory of deism' view is predicated on a thesis of a relatively weak Church. Yet, as we shall see below, there is no consensus amongst historians on the weak Church thesis, and it has been increasingly challenged. Returning to the Butler-triumphant-over-deism thesis, if, as we know, deist writers were a mere handful over half a century and most of the leading writers died in the years preceding Butler's polemic, should we not consider this a factor in their decline? Tindal, Collins and Woolston all died, for example, in the years 1729–33. Given this rather intractable fact, if we accept that the coterie of deists never managed to attract any significant number of followers or any real broad interest aside from the negative type or sensation hunters, is it surprising that the deist controversy petered out sooner rather than later? We may even say that, even if it had existed, for it to have continued for much longer would have been unlikely. Interestingly, it is rarely mentioned in Enlightenment studies that, even on the Anglican side, there has never been unquestioned acceptance of the idea that the Christian knight Butler single-handedly defeated the deist threat. Mossner long ago argued that even to pose the question in that manner is misleading, and Butler's analogical method was anyway not original.[89]

Theology in the Church of England by B. W. Young:

[89] *The Enlightenment and Religion.* S. J. Barnett, Manchester: (Manchester UP, 2003), p. 30 ff.

GLADSTONE FAMILY GROUP.

It had been the custom for centuries for English statesmen, upon retiring from official life, to devote themselves to the classics. Mr. Gladstone, who was pre-eminently a statesman-scholar, found it very congenial to his mind and habits to follow this old English custom. He first translated and published "The Odes of Horace." Then he took Butler's "Analogy" as a textbook,and prepared and published "Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler." The discussion necessarily takes a wide range, treating, among other matters, of Butler's method, its application to the Scriptures, the future life, miracles, and the mediation of Christ. Says W.T. Stead: "No one who reads the strenuous arguments with which Mr. Gladstone summarizes the reasoning of Bishop Butler on the future life is conscious of any weakening in the vigorous dialectic which was so often employed with brilliant success in the House of Commons." ~Richard B. Cook

Those who suffer or fear they may suffer or who suffer because of the suffering of others may be reminded that whatever the foundation of acceptance of and submission to the moral order of the universe, these grounds did not include an assurance we would be spared the physical effects of suffering under the present dispensation. In arguing thus Butler is repeating and applying to his own case the old Stoic attitude that we ought to concentrate our attention and energy of making right what we can control and not in fretting about what we cannot control.[90]

[90] The well-known Serenity Prayer expresses a similar and perhaps related sentiment: ***God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.***

This much we know from experience, but evidence-based writers often favor certain modes of experience and neglect others. In this study of Butler, we have aimed to attend to reports based on the spectrum of experience in Butler's works and in the commentaries.

VI. Conclusions

Our conclusion is presented in two parts. Chapter 14 sums up the results of our inquiry so far, meaning by "our" the work of all those acquainted with Butler over the past 300 years. Members of this Butler society have expressed themselves in print, in conversation, and in the classroom. Chapter 15 considers these results and all that we know regarding Butler's intervention in the Church of England, the development of philosophy, the evolution of religion, and ethics, and his contribution to human history. Finally, we comment on the prospects for applying our interpretation of Butler's outcomes in our lives today and our expectations for the future. In Butler, "future life" refers to any unlived segment of a person's life, pre-mortem or post-mortem.

Most of Butler's argumentation is philosophical in nature, that is, he presents evidence in support of claims and to encourage a way of life, as opposed to testifying on the basis of his personal lived experience or appealing to the authority of scripture, the beauty of certain sounds and graphic images, or the exemplary behavior of esteemed persons.

- We are in a most precarious situation which requires immediate attention. Our waywardness can be apparent—even obvious—in those who live with pain, suffering and general misery, but also disguised in the lives of those in indulge in and enjoy the more superficial pleasures, pleasures that never can satisfy fully.

- The ultimate explanation of our peril is unknown to us, but we can discern the more immediate cause, which is that we have been distracted, confused, or otherwise reluctant to avail ourselves of the remedies for our discontent as they present themselves in day to day experience, and as has been documented in the world's art, literature, and science. "For, though this great disorder is brought about, as all actions are done, by means of some natural passion, yet this may be, as it undoubtedly is, brought about by the perversion of such passion, implanted in us for other, and those very good purposes." (AR 1.3.15) The natural passions point us toward objects the attainment of which provides pleasure, but our attempts to be fully satisfied by virtue of attaining the state toward which we are inclined by nature may miss the mark. For Butler, it is not the passion that is perverse, but rather the mismatch of passion and object that is perverse, disordered, unintended, and unsatisfying. This disorder may be because we have consumed or acquired too much or too little of the object of affection or because we misidentify the object desired. When Butler says that the search for truth is the business of his life he means especially the truth of the human condition and especially the causes of its disorder, the truth of the causes of manifest discontent at least so far as we can know them, and the truth regarding what we can do to conform ourselves with the original intent of nature and of nature's God..

- The cure for our dreadful condition of disconnect and mismatch between what we by nature most deeply desire and what we have so far been able to attain is not some magic potion, not some mysterious ceremony, not the acquisition of fame, wealth, and honor, and certainly not in a glorious victory over the enemy in a violent conflict. The cure so

sought after is not in any of these, but rather, as Jesus said to the rich young man: your submission to the rule of God must be total and without reservation, with nothing held back, but continuing confidently on the way to salvation. When we work on philosophy we work on ourselves, and when we work on ourselves we are not only "playing head games and language games," but also and more importantly engaging in a struggle to learn the truth about ourselves and our place in the world, our destiny, As we search for the solution, the remedy to our ills, we quickly recognize the importance of the injunction, "you must change your life." But change in what way and by what means? "*Disengagement* is absolutely necessary to enjoyment; and a person may have so steady and fixed an eye upon his own interest, whatever he places it in, as may hinder him from *attending* to many gratifications within his reach, which others have their minds free and open to." (FS 11.9) The human person considered individually or socially can be freed from frustration, anxiety, and the misguided satisfactions of the prisoners in Plato's cave only by accepting the discipline and attention required to attend to and submit to the course of nature with its karmic system of rewarding virtue and punishing vice, by honoring conscience as the supreme internal judge of virtue and vice, and by remaining alert and vigilant to the marks and signs of divinity to be found in scripture preeminently but also in all the world's art, literature, and performance, considered as an evolving system of symbols conducive to the eventual consummation of our lives as human beings. Our rendering of Butler's ideas for use in guiding what we do and how we live today draws on two images suggested by Giovanni Papini and carried over into American philosophy by William James: the corridor of truth and the man-god, both of which serve to connect or bridge the ethics and religion of previous ages with the technology of the age to come. Happiness, eternal life, salvation, will follow naturally and almost automatically to those who change their lives by surrendering their own foolish ideas of how to live gathered up in this world, which is in fact the devil's playground, and submit to the will of God (as accommodated to our understanding and our abilities) manifested in the karmic system of nature, the conscientious control we have over our own actions, and the revelation provided in Holy Scripture preeminently but as supplemented by all the arts and sciences, all the constructions innovative and traditional, and all the performances by individual and by groups, some scripted or choreographed, others spontaneous.

14. Summation of the Case Advanced

Bishop Butler's work is not an exercise in dry; abstract speculation; it is an expression of and elaboration on a rule of life. Philosophy understood as a way of life is in accord with the work of the ancients (Stoics, Epicureans, etc.), and theirs, along with the early Christians such as Paul, Origen, and Augustine, is the example Butler follows. Everything Butler has to say is subsumed under Biblical concepts and categories. Many readers, including some of the most sympathetic, never tire of pointing out that Butler, with his labyrinthine sentences, is a good philosopher but a poor writer. An early Christian rule of life is presented in Acts 2:42-47. One

reason ritual is so important for religion is that it unites those who are totally with the program with those who still doubt, deny, or just do not know together in a single, coherent, and expressive performance. Philosophy is also often ritualized, in the disputations that Butler despised and in the therapeutic encounters we attributed to him.

What can we conclude? No doubt a writer who is weak in the area of abstract speculation is somewhat out of the philosophical mainstream, and a piece written with pastoral intent should be judged primarily, at least, by the pastoral outcome (or effect) of the writing. The redemption of our text on Butler depends on our ability to associate the life and work of Bishop Butler forward to the issues that consume our time and attention now, and backward to the healing (therapeutic) ministry of Jesus and its role in the whole redemption narrative. This narrative is now held by us in trust. Those who have heard the Gospel preached must decide what to do with that which they have received, that is, must decide what part to play in the unfolding and continuing narrative. The redemptive narrative includes a great variety of parts including passive bystanders and active opponents. Butler defends the analogical method of urging people to reflect on whatever principles of conduct they have already accepted in practice and apply those principles in fresh situations or, if that proves impossible, to abandon the principles in all cases. In any case, hypocrisy is to be avoided.

In other words, for any telling, retelling, depiction, or representation we have only to ask Does it preach? Meaning does it draw people away from the distractions of this world and put them back in their proper place in the general narrative of redemption.?

This book concentrates on showing that the observed system of nature together with the human constitution of passions, benevolence, self-love, and conscience are enough for purposes of our probation. According to Butler both ethics and religion are matters of practice and not of formulation of and assent to propositions. So, for purposes of probation, practice is all we need.

Those who insist on denying God and immortality, still cannot deny moral freedom, and even those who deny moral freedom cannot deny the propriety of virtue and piety. They are left without an excuse.

Some scientific opponents of ethics and religion rely on the claim that the ordinary world can only be a moral economy if it was created, set in motion, and continues to be maintained by a supreme moral being. This they find incredible, if only because they believe they have found a better explanation, in physicalist terms, of why the world is the way it is, including its morally relevant features if there be such. Two independent lines have been used in reply.

(1) First and most obviously, there is the argument that God does exist and is the creator of nature. We can therefore infer that since God created nature, the course and constitution of nature must be a moral economy, and since nature is a moral economy maintained by following nature in accord with conscience as the rule of life, living in accord with virtue must be efficacious, must tend toward the results we would like to get anyway. Since God is good and omnipotent God would only create a world with a moral economy in which the good are rewarded and the bad are punished. Since there is a moral economy created by a good and powerful deity, we can be confident that if we are with the program, we will get a good outcome.

(2) But also, if the opponents claim to be in support of virtue and the conventional notions of right and wrong, if they acknowledge not to be social Darwinists, then we can reply that what needs to be explained is not just or primarily the physical world but rather the whole

system known as the moral economy. It seems unlikely they will be able to provide such an explanation, but even if they can, they will still be left having to obey the natural law, the law of nature. There does seem to be empirical support for the natural law. Today there is evidence that lower animals have an innate sense of justice. Although there is great variety in mores among humans there seems to be a consensus of what is appropriate behavior across groups to members of the group. The genius of Christianity and the other great world religions is to extend this morality beyond one's group to all of humanity.

> The design then of the following treatise will be to shew, that the several parts principally objected against in this moral and Christian dispensation, including its scheme, its publication, and the proof which God has afforded us of its truth; that the particular parts principally objected against in this whole dispensation, are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of nature, or providence; that the chief objections themselves which are alleged against the former, are no other, than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, where they are found in fact to be inconclusive; and that this argument from analogy is in general, unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion (2.8), notwithstanding the objections which may seem to lie against it, and the real ground which there may be for difference of opinion, as to the particular degree of weight which is to be laid upon it. This is a general account of what may be looked for in the following treatise. And I shall begin it with that which is the foundation of all our hopes and of all our fears; all our hopes and fears, which are of any consideration; I mean a future life. (AR Intro 13)

The following summation of the argument in full references Butler's original statement as it appears in his works, and the chapter of this book which investigates whether the premises appealed to are true and whether the inferences relied on are cogent. We feel bound to follow Butler so far as he is right, but also make it our business to pursue the truth regardless of who has affirmed or denied this or that.

The Present Crisis

Butler's main motivation in writing his works (the letters to Clarke, the Rolls Sermons, the *Analogy of Religion*, the Public Sermons, and the Durham Charge) was that he was distressed at the conditions of immorality and irreligion which he observed and which he had heard of from reliable witnesses.

> It is come, I know not how to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. Accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. On the contrary, thus

> much at least, will be here found, not taken for granted but proved, that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not so clear a case, that there is nothing in it. There is, I think, strong evidence of its truth; but it is certain no one can, upon principles of reason, be satisfied of the contrary. The practical consequence to be drawn from this, is not attended to by every one who is concerned in it. (AR.adv.2)
>
> the terrible accidents which often happen from riot and debauchery (DC.20)

Descriptive Analysis of the Causes of the Crisis.

Butler appeals to common consent in claiming the world is in a state of moral and spiritual crisis. He identifies the cause of the present situation in terms of a general deviation from the path of virtue, and from the life prescribed by natural and revealed religion. More specifically he complains about people's poor reading skills, their neglect of the Bible, their failure to follow or even to understand their own conscience, their inability to read the signs abundant in nature in determining wherein their best interest lies and how best they might pursue their own happiness. There has also been a general neglect of the medical, educational, political, and religious institutions that have the potential to facilitate the work of redemption.

Butler thought he had made out his case sufficiently, but he disliked and distrusted any system of indoctrination or any coercive form of persuasion. The case for God admittedly becomes obscure whether we follow the appeal to experience as exemplified by William James or the philosophical proofs of God's existence, for which James had no use. Butler's main contribution to Natural Theology was not in the formulation of a proof, but in the insistence that that who consider an attempted proof must consider the totality of the evidence presented as a cumulative case and in terms of its effect regarding actions and practices what will help us escape or mitigate the harms threatened by the crisis as described earlier.

As an apologist Butler was expected to considered all arguments and objections raised against God, freedom, a future life, the credibility of the Bible, the moral order implicit in nature, the capacity of human nature to follow the path of virtue and piety, and any credible charges that might be brought against the moral and spiritual institutions of society. Butler claims to have no quarrel with those who deny any of his positions as long as they can supply sound reasons for rejecting any essential of ethics or religion.

On Revealed Religion and the Credibility of the Bible.

Butler acknowledges and replies to six objections

- **That Christianity or religion generally is no longer of importance**
- **That accounts of miracles lack credibility**
- **That there are numerous irregularities and unexpected occurrences in the content of the Bible revelation**

- **That the appointment of a mediator or redeemer is not credible**
- **That the Christian scheme lacks universal application**
- **That the evidence in favor of the system of Christianity is insufficient**

On Natural Religion (God, Freedom, a Future Life, and the Moral Economy of the World)

Ethics of Love of God, the Natural World, Ourselves, and Others, as Grounded in an Examination of Human Nature

Our investigation of the life, work, and reception of Bishop Butler has shown that his principal objective was to discover the rule of life, make that rule explicit and as much as possible impress this way of life on all "who have ears." Butler uncovers four aspects of the rule of life. Using our intellect to calculate or guess at probabilities, we will do best at living well by following nature in letting God rule ("letting God be God") as the deity is represented to us in the course and constitution of nature (God's creation), our human conscience (also God's work), and by studying (or searching) scripture so far as it appears to be from God. Butler was most concerned to show that he could preach the Gospel in a way that appealed to the good will and common sense of all people yet was in accord with the most modern science, the best and most recent text of scripture, and the teaching of the church as passed down from antiquity. The person who wishes to flourish in this life and at its end to die the death of the righteous would do well to learn and put into practice the rule of life. All the fine scholarship in the world is of no use if it is disregarded in practice, just as the most energetic and agile practice needs to be guided by discipline and intelligence. For Butler, the whole moral economy of the world is based on a network of love. God creates, sustains, and governs the world out of love as perfectly as is possible. Humans are "creatures of special interest" who have the capacity to embrace themselves, their neighbors, and the whole of the natural world in a love without limit, but for some reason most often fail to consummate the aim and intent of their being as humans. Butler was troubled by the adultery, the irreligion, the drunkenness, the oppression, the indifference, the hypocrisy, the selfishness, the insanity, and all forms of immorality he and everyone else encountered in their day to day lives. In his preaching he recognized it is proper to threaten wrong doers with punishment because wrongdoers will be punished by the natural consequences of their way of life regardless of what the preachers do. Butler also recognized the importance of holding out a credible hope of reward since in the cool hour of reflection people will prefer the course of action that seems most to their benefit or at least that will likely do no harm.

Two points were obvious to Butler.

- One was that the world we live in is a teleological system, a complex and interrelated rule of final causes, a state of ethics, a state of religion, a providential government of the world also known as the kingdom of God. We have the moral faculties sufficient to identify what is right and what is wrong in our actions and those of others, and we have the rational faculties to act consistently for our own benefit and for the benefit of others.

We can see the designs of providence enough to enforce upon us religion and the practice of virtue..

- The second point that Butler considered obvious is that the design and intent of the whole, the general system of the world, seems quite beyond our comprehension. (FS 15.6-7)

15 Loomings

If the husbandman lets his seed-time pass without sowing,
the whole year is lost to him beyond recovery. (AR 1.2.10)

So far we have worked on Butler, philosophy and religion and on ourselves in a framework that considers Butler's ancient and modern sources, his creative intervention in the tradition, and his reception by students, critical commentators, and the general public over the past 300 years.

We agree with Marx that having interpreted the world in various ways, the remaining problem is to change it. We also agree with Butler that we know so little about ourselves and the prospects for the future that the context for change is a fog. Conscience is forever running ahead of consciousness. Butler's contention is that by following nature in the form of the human conscience and by recognizing that sometimes even less than an even chance is actionable.

Several of Butler's topics no longer appeal to the very people he aimed to appeal to: miracles, prophecy, logical proofs of God's existence, acceptance of distinctions of class, and rejection of democratic rule. The roles of the monarchy, the House of Lords, and the Church of England have changed enough since Butler was involved with them that we cannot take his personal life as an example to guide us in life. Just as a healthy digestive system will take what it can use and discard the rest as waste, so competent, critical readers are advised to search the perennial and favor it over the trivial and ephemeral. Butler represents linkage in the chain forged of philosophy, religion, and ethics. We are located 300 or so links down the chain. Imitation, adulation, or excessive citation as an authority are not only pointless but detrimental to our objective—making Bishop Butler better known for the benefit of all. What is needed, as Richard Swinburne (1977/1993, 7) has urged, is for those involving themselves with Christian thought to return to the standard of argumentation (observation, retention, imagination, and inference) established long ago.

> It is one of the intellectual tragedies of our age that when philosophy in English-speaking countries has developed high standards of argument and clear thinking, the style of theological writing has been largely influenced by the continental philosophy of Existentialism, which, despite its considerable other merits, has been distinguished by a very loose and sloppy style of argument. If argument has a place in theology, large-scale theology needs clear and rigorous argument. That point was very well grasped by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, by Berkeley, Butler, and Paley. It is high time for theology to return to their standards.

The equal and opposite error is to ignore, deny, or neglect Butler. If the chain is sound, the previous links will be there whether we attend to them or not.

As we look to the future what is the takeaway from Butler's life and work? Our finding is that we should concentrate (1) on issues that have a direct bearing on the happiness (or benefit) of all sentient beings, (2) on connecting our intellectual and scientific research with actions that enhance the benefit of all, and (3) that to carry out these two essential operations we employ the method of evidence and advocacy.

Butler requires that no evidence be tampered with or suppressed. The advocate of virtue and piety, which Butler saw himself as, must consider the whole course and constitution of nature, and especially the workings of human nature. The facts or appearances to which we are privy are what they are and should be displayed as such. Butler prefers to present readers with premises only letting them draw their own conclusions. In a forensic context, the word 'action' refers to the contemplated action that the respective advocates are supporting or opposing. One who wishes to "push for" an action ought to present evidence and argumentation (or be represented by someone who can present the case in full as a cumulative case or narrative). Our question, then, is how best to continue the narrative. Butler defines piety (or being religious) as submission to the deity, and he makes it clear that this submission is a practical matter, a matter of how one acts. When we consider evidence we are, of course, interested in what has earned our assent on the basis of evidence presented, but we are most concerned with which claims or injunctions concerning faith and morals are actionable, where to be actionable means to be sufficiently credible that it is rational (or warranted) to act on such principle.

There are those today who think it is wise to deny what they call, with a tone of derision, the Grand Narrative. It may be too late for the post-modern. Remember when Christian Science was said to deny physical illness? Or the Shakers denied sex? So too, you can deny the Grand Narrative all you want, such foolishness is protected speech. And you can cover yourself against the charge of not caring about truth (or truth seeking) by claiming there is no truth. The fault is in the practicalities. Refusing some medical treatments makes less likely your chance of survival. Abstaining from sex decreases your chance (mother or father) of passing on wisdom to the kids. So too, if there is no common, received, really grand narrative, then there is no point or purpose to living, no language to express our misery, and no way of buying or selling in the marketplace of ideas. Things are what they are and will be what they will be regardless of our preferences or protestations. We have but one thing to do in this life, to be virtuous and pious, that is to love God, to love the created world, to live ourselves and to love our neighbors. We should take care not to overstate the potential for conflict among these principles.

Much of Western philosophy turns on getting clear about the relationship between duty and interest, between virtue and happiness. Whatever genuine conflicts remain can be settled, if at all, by appeal to conscience and reason. For the theist, conscience and reason are as much from God as nature. For the teleologist (one who believes in final causes) unity of origin and intent implies unity of aim and end. To be effective, conscience must be informed and educated. The formation of conscience results from work in all the sciences, but for the religious, the preeminent source of illumination is, of course, sacred scripture. Butler put his finger on exactly

where the line should be draw. We must clear the workspace of anything distractive and concentrate on reading the evidence before us. Such reading requires paying close attention to all sources such as nature, art, our own inner natures, and the scriptures. When the devout study scripture, they should remain open to all issues of authenticity of the text and its canonical status, and to all issues of interpretation in translation, in commentary, in illustration, and in preaching.

Butler's interest in philosophy and religion seems driven by a concern with bad behavior: disregard for the church, adultery, drunkenness, rioting, and the like. Such psychologists as Erich Fromm, Karen Horney and Albert Ellis have mastered the method of pastoral philosophy without reference to Butler.[91]

Regarding the future there are two consequences:

(1) one is that those who speak of philosophy and religion outside of the framework of evidence and argumentation retire from the field until they are prepared to present evidence-based advocacy.

(2) The other is that those who pretend to be presenting an evidence-based reading be doing that.

In Butler we see a keen sense of being able to sketch a line from any assertion back to the primary evidence. The path of the line must be without exception and the primary evidence presented must be the best evidence, not fake, untampered, and incorrectly identified.

[91] Pastoral Philosophy is a dialog conducted using the received methods of evidence and argumentation with the difference that the discussion begins with one participant complaining of a serious issue, usually a forced choice, reflection on which has led to perplexity and discontent in living, and ends when the initiating party overcomes the discomfort experienced and is able act with confidence, clarity of purpose, and determination.

Toward the reconstruction of religion.

Even if we accept Butler's picture of a single deity, creator and governor, source of all of nature, of art, and of miracles and revelation, we still have to be reminded of both the vastness and the dynamic and progressive nature of all that is, or could be, attributed to the deity.

Butler's rendering of the chain of being (*scala natura, s*cale of nature), unlike many other versions, is primarily empirical. He looks about him and concludes that the order apparent in the world must have been created. He takes note of the moral economy and concludes this too can be attributed to the deity. He absolves animals from vice because whatever they do they are following nature, whereas humans have within their nature superior principles which can be overpowered but which ought to be obeyed.

The distance separating humanity and divinity is great indeed, but there are points of contact and potential communication. We are generally ignorant of what the world is about. We do not know with any certainty who we are, what we can do, what we can hope for, or, some cases, what we should do. We have our sensory powers. Some of ours are inferior to those of animals, but they are of great use to us for the study of nature. Butler follows the Stoics in taking the rule of life to be "follow nature." We also have a moral hierarchy in our nature. The superior principles of self-love and benevolence rule the essential but unrulily passions. Conscience (reflection) is by right superior in our nature, but can be defeated, usurped, or corrupted. Reason is essential for rule for God or for humans. God may be a utilitarian, but for us probability is the guide to life.

Attribution, Sense, and Reference

The most fundamental question Butler faces is that of what in our experience can be attributed to God. Theists who believe the biblical creation story will naturally answer "everything." But there are problems. There are apparent defects or contradiction in nature, in scripture, and even in our own human nature. We are or suppose ourselves to be rational beings, but all too often we do not act rationally. Against the deists, but argued ad hominem: you deists have attributed the world of nature to God even though you are aware of apparent defects, so therefore you cannot cite the analogous defects in scripture as reason for refusing to attribute scripture to God. You could, of course, backtrack and deny that the natural world is God's creation, but that is not an attractive option since we have abundant proof that God exists, good reason to expect a wise and benevolent God to created the best world possible.

There is no reason to think that the religion we make explicit and militant will be the Christian (Anglican) religion that Butler knew. The religion we want to make explicit and militant is an institution such as Butler described, one that despite its defects and shortcomings is able to deliver the goods, to serve as a noiseless medium for transmission of the Gospel, and we want to do this because we are convinced the Gospel in whatever form has the potential needed for the redemption of persons. We are witnesses, and therefore we must testify as best we can. Testimony about a conscience that is the image of God in us will only be effective if our outward action as known to others is conscientious. Testimony about the scripture being sacred and a reliable guide to life will have the desired effect only if we live according to the Word as best we understand it. Our claims about the integrity or hypocrisy of institutions will impress no one if we have not been relentless in working for the reform of the institutions in which we have been involved. If our testimony is self-serving or even appears to be self-serving it will appear that we are being disingenuous in claiming that what we have to entrusted to us to be used for the benefit of others.

Those who aim at a fulfilled life and at dying the death of the righteous, therefore, have every reason to leads lives of virtue and piety, but just as a flawed church can serve to transmit the Gospel, so a flawed person may do so as well. All of which is to say that the original intent of the deity will not be frustrated even if some human stories do not have a happy ending.

The Furthest Frontier

The following grounds for dismissal of Butler have lingered on the table for too long. They are distractive of the important practical matters that cry out for discussion without being probative of anything for or against. As Butler pointed out, the refutation of an opponent is just that: a refutation; it does nothing to the positive case for your side.

- Dismiss as too old to offer anything to the future
- Dismiss as meaningless
- Dismiss as self-contradictory
- Dismiss as incompatible with the other
- Dismiss as already disproved
- Dismiss as not of interest
- Dismiss as having insufficient warrant, especially for rejection of other religions
- Dismiss as not rigorous
- Dismiss as superstition
- Dismiss as enthusiasm
- Dismiss as typical academic treatment
- Dismiss as inaccessible language
- Dismiss as insensitive to needs of poor and oppressed
- Dismiss as naïve regarding benefits of living virtuously
- Dismiss as too insignificant to read, write on, or act in accord with

Being Read into the Butler Project

Many roads have led us to Butler, and by demonstrating the poverty of the resistance from without and of the inhibitions from within, we have no reason not to continue down these same roads. Following these well-established routes draws in much of the available evidence relevant to the decision of whether to adopt, follow, and take inspiration from Butler's expression of the Christian way a life, and linking to all of them helps to establish a cumulative case that is undoubtably actionable.

- The Gladstone Four: Aristotle, Augustine, Dante, Butler
- Natural Theology: Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Richard Hooker, Butler
- The British Moralists:
- Philosophy of Religion: Pascal, Butler, William James, Wittgenstein
- Social Ethics and Conscientious Objection: Butler, Thoreau, Gandhi, M. L. King, Dorothy Day
- Modern Science: Boyle, Newton, Clarke, Butler, Paley, Darwin, Teilhard
- Poetry: Southey, Coleridge, Arnold, Hill, Ginsberg
- Fiction: Fielding, Sterne, Austen, referenced by RWE
- Politics: Prince Bishop Butler, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, James Barry, W. E. Gladstone

The Search for Areas of Best Reception

From the convergence of these five lines, we propose to move out into the world given to us by the accident of birth, recognizing that the conceptual scheme we inherited and grew up with is distant from the world we are being read into. [See discussion of the "Return of All Knowledge].

We have colonized and have been colonized. All that now needs to be undone. Our modest goal of making Bishop Butler better known requires that we make ourselves better known to ourselves, that in addition to dismissing the silly dismissals of Butler we attend to with sincere earnestness the serious and important issues, abstract and intellectual puzzles that can only be addressed in terms of the existential reality of persons with whom we are acquainted both in the depth that comes from print and the other media, and through personal, social, and face to face encounters.

- Asian and Asian American
- Black, African, and African American
- Celtic, Anglican, and Anglo American
- Church, Religion, and Philosophy of Life
- Community, School, College, University Education
- Computers, Digitalization, and Automation
- Environmental Care
- European Continent
- Government and Politics
- Law and Criminology
- LGBTQ
- Medicine and Public Health
- Native American and Indigenous
- Places Associated with Butler's Life
- Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- Women and Feminist Thought

The program set out above may seem vast and unmanageable. It is vast, but if it is unmanageable that is because we have no intention of managing anything. Our strategy is to use the new computerized and automated technology to continue the tradition which, obviously, was developed over thousands of years without the benefit of the electronic technologies but only with reliance on the strength that comes when people of virtue and piety gather in small communities of their own choosing. They mind their own business. They do not oppress or exploit or manipulate others, and therefore form strong alliances in defense of their way of life. They honor their commitments and promises, and therefore are respected as good citizens, good people to do business with. If someone wants and needs help, they are willing to help, even at some risk to themselves. They recognize that philosophy works on the cognitive or epistemological track of helping those unsure that to make of the evidence they have at hand or how to act in accord with that evidence, but also on the therapeutic line of suggesting a way of ameliorating harm done and if possible curing the soul self, of fixing what is broke or if not that of learning to live with the wound.

Glossary

The purpose of this glossary is to collect in quotation or paraphrase Butler's definitions of some of his more important terms. We have also provided definitions of modern terms not found in Butler's works, and we have tried to flesh out Butler's meaning whenever it was unclear or archaic. We have made no attempt to describe the ordinary conversational sense of these expressions or to repeat what has already been better said in any good dictionary. The OED, for example, contains 821 citations to Bishop Butler.

Affection. A passion that sims at and rests in its object. The satisfaction of an affection often depends on a rational strategy in obtaining the object, and for the objects obtained to contribute to happiness always requires a good strategy or rule of life. If I desire a garden it is not enough to want the garden. Much careful planning and preparation is needed in order to obtain the object of desire.

Agnostics deny any human ability to have an evidence-based preference of among atheism, deism, or theism.

Analogy. Analogies are often dismissed as "proving nothing," but when an analogy (similarity) is formulated as an argument, it may often have probative force. The argument that the sun will rise tomorrow is extraordinarily strong and persuasive if not demonstrative, but it is nothing more than an appeal to analogy (precedent).

Apathy. The ancient stoics considered all passions unworthy of rational beings and insisted they be extirpated, leaving us apathetic or without passion. Butler took the more common sense if less philosophical view that passions needed supervision, not eradication, and served positive purposes.

Appetites. The parts of the inward frame of human nature include appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection, or what some call drives.

Atheism. The denial of God as creator and ruler of the world. Often associated with necessity and physicalism.

Benevolence is love for others.

Brutes are non-human animals driven by their passions free of moral considerations. "And, to mention but one instance more, that brutes, without reason, should act, in many respects, with a sagacity and foresight vastly greater than what men have in those respects, would be thought impossible. Yet it is certain they do act with such superior foresight; whether it be their own, indeed, is another question." (AR 2.3.8)

Cement of society (in Butler) is the system of common passions that holds society together.

Chance is nothing in reality but refers to events the laws of which are unknown.

Character. To 'give a character' is in the first instance to offer a description of someone that, to borrow Joseph Butler's phrase, 'praises or dispraises' them." (Pettiigrove, 2015, FS4.15)

Christianity. We do not agree with Butler's conflation of Christianity with "religion in general," but we are grateful that he made his own understanding of Christianity and of religion in general fully explicit: "Now the divine government of the world, implied in the notion of religion in general and of Christianity, contains in it; that mankind is appointed to live in a future state (1.1); that there, every one shall be rewarded or punished (1.2); rewarded or punished respectively for all that behaviour here, which we comprehend under the words, virtuous or vitious, morally good or evil (1.3): that our present life is a probation, a state of trial (1.4), and of discipline (1.5), for that future one; notwithstanding the objections, which men may fancy they have, from notions of necessity, against there being any such moral plan as this at all (1.6); and whatever objections may appear to lie against the wisdom and goodness of it, as it stands so imperfectly made known to us at present (1.7): that this world being in a state of apostacy and wickedness, and consequently of ruin, and the sense both of their condition and duty being greatly corrupted amongst men, this gave occasion for an additional dispensation of providence; of the utmost importance (2.1); proved by miracles (2.2); but containing in it many things appearing to us strange and not to have been expected (2.3); a dispensation of providence, which is a scheme or system of things (2.4); carried on by the mediation of a divine person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world (2.5); yet not revealed to all men, nor proved with the strongest possible evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such part of mankind, and with such particular evidence as the wisdom of God thought fit (2.6–7)." (AR Intro.13)

Church. Butler is critical of the corruption of the church, but he maintains that from the first small communities of Christians to the present "universal" institutions the church is needed to serve as a medium for the transmission of the Gospel. (SS 1.3)

Compassion is momentary love. (FS1.6)

Conscience is the principle of reflection in human nature by which they distinguish between, approve, and disapprove their own actions. "There is a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions. We are plainly constituted such sort of creatures as to reflect upon our own nature. The mind can take a view of what passes within itself, its propensions, aversions, passions, affections, as respecting such objects, and in such degrees, and of the several actions consequent thereupon. In this survey it approves of one, disapproves of another, and towards a third is affected neither of these ways, but is quite indifferent. This principle in man, by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and action, is conscience; for this is the strict sense of the word, tho' sometimes it is used so." as to take in more. (FS 1.8) More than anything else, Butler's appeal is to conscience and the importance of conscientious action over the whole of one's life. Butler offers us a refined view of conscience. He asserts that the human conscience is the voice of God within, but also affirms the authority of conscience over the atheist. He acknowledges that some people appear not to have a conscience, just as some are missing a limb. Butler also considers the corrupt conscience at some length. The point is that some bad people do bad things not because they are ignoring the voice of conscience or lack a conscience. They do bad things because according to their creed and convictions such bad things are obligatory because they appear good. The racist, misogynist, homophobe, and so forth, will often they to seize the ethical high ground with an impassioned appeal, and they are not necessarily insincere. Finally, there is the familiar case of those who do wrong knowing full well that it is wrong. The natural response is one of guilt and shame, and Butler makes much of the function of shame being to prevent our doing shameful things.

Death. The nature of death is unknown to us. Butler argues at length that we have no reason to think that death is the destruction of our living powers. His argument in AR 1.1 has often been disputed, but critical readers will note that Butler is not claiming that "death is not the destruction of our living powers" is true but only that it is actionable. That we are justified in acting on the presumption that death will not destroy our living powers carries a lower standard of proof than the corresponding truth claim.

[Deism] The term is not used by Butler, but some commentators make much of the point that Butler took issue with the deistic view, i.e., that one may affirm the deity but deny revelation.

Devotion is the actual exercise of the affection we feel for God. (FS 14.6)

Enthusiasm goes beyond true religious devotion derived on evidence-based affection for God and elevates individual feelings over institutional memory and the communal representations of the tradition. (FS 14.6)

Evidence is that which is known directly, i.e., is evident, without needing to be inferred from any other knowledge. Butler stressed the need to consider the whole of the evidence considered as a cumulative case.

Fall of man. Butler relates the present "ruined" state of the world to the Biblical narrative.

Fatalist. "Now when it is said by a fatalist, that the whole constitution of nature, and the actions of men, that every thing and every mode and circumstance of every thing, is necessary, and could not possibly have been otherwise, it is to be observed: that this necessity does not exclude deliberation, choice, preference, and acting from certain principles, and to certain ends; because all this is matter of undoubted experience, acknowledged by all, and what every man may, every moment, be conscious of. And from hence it follows, that necessity, alone and of itself, is in no sort an account of the constitution of nature, and how things came to be and to continue as they are; but only an account of this circumstance relating to their origin and continuance, that they could not have been otherwise than they are and have been. The assertion, that every thing is by necessity of nature, is not an answer to the question, whether the world came into being as it is by an intelligent agent forming it thus, or not; but to quite another question, Whether it came into being as it is, in that way and manner which we call necessarily, or in that way and manner which we call freely. For, suppose farther, that one, who was a fatalist, and one, who kept to his natural sense of things, and believed himself a free agent, were disputing together, and vindicating their respective opinions, and they should happen to instance in a house, they would agree that it was built by an architect. Their difference concerning necessity and freedom, would occasion no difference of judgment concerning this, but only concerning another matter, whether the architect built it necessarily or freely. Suppose, then, they should proceed to inquire, concerning the constitution of nature; in a lax way of speaking, one of them might say, it was by necessity, and the other by freedom; but, if they had any meaning to their words, as the latter must mean a free agent, so the former must at length be reduced to mean an agent, whether he would say one or more, acting by necessity; for abstract notions can do nothing. Indeed, we ascribe to God a necessary existence, uncaused by any agent. For we find within ourselves the idea of infinity, *i.e.* immensity and eternity, impossible, even in imagination, to be removed out of being. We seem to discern intuitively, that there must, and cannot but be, somewhat, external to ourselves; answering this idea or the archetype of it. And from hence (for *this abstract,* as much as any other, implies a *concrete*) we conclude, that there is, and cannot but be, an infinite and immense eternal being existing prior to all design contributing to his

existence, and exclusive of it. And, from the scantiness of language, a manner of speaking has been introduced, that necessity is the foundation, the reason, the account of the existence of God. But it is not alleged, nor can it be at all intended, that every thing exists as it does by this kind of necessity a necessity antecedent in nature to design; it cannot, I say, be meant, that every thing exists as it does, by this kind of necessity, upon several accounts; and particularly, because it is admitted, that design in the actions of men, contributes to many alterations in nature. For, if any deny this, I shall not pretend to reason with them." (AR 1.6.3)

Final cause. Butler's system is teleological; events and actions are aimed at achieving some goal purpose. Such ends of action are called the final cause of the event or action.

God is understood here as the infinite, omnipresent, self-existing being; the benevolent and omnipotent governor of the world.

Government, moral. "For the notion of a future account, and general righteous judgment, implies some sort of temptations to what is wrong, otherwise there would be no moral possibility of doing wrong, nor ground for judgment or discrimination." (AR 1.4.1)

Habits. "The constitution of human creatures, and indeed of all creatures which come under our notice, is such, as that they are capable of naturally becoming qualified for states of life, for which they were once wholly unqualified. … Whether the word habit is applicable to all these improvements, and, in particular, how far the powers of memory and of habits may be powers of the same nature, I shall not inquire. But that perceptions come into our minds readily and of course, by means of their having been there before, seems a thing of the same sort, as readiness in any particular kind of action; proceeding from being accustomed to it. And aptness to recollect practical observations of service in our conduct, is plainly habit in many cases. There are habits of perception and habits of action.

Happiness is a general state of being in which appetites or affections enjoy their objects but only to the degree they do not become "inconvenient". (FS pref..37) Happiness is that state we see clearly as in our best interest to attain, the opposite of misery, but we do not need to have a clear image of happiness in order to pursue it.

Hypocrisy "signifies little more than their pretending what they really do not mean, in order to delude one another. But in scripture, which treats chiefly of our behaviour towards God and our own consciences, it signifies, not only the endeavour to delude our fellow creatures, but likewise insincerity towards him, and towards ourselves." (SS 1741.2) **In our time issues of hypocrisy have been exacerbated by our failure to repair and replace the older language of morals with expressions of what we really feel. We do not doubt that there are eternal verities, but we recognize, as did Butler, that the language used to position ourselves in relation to those sacred truths is and always will be fluid.**

Ignorance. Creation is absolutely and entirely out of our depth, and beyond the extent of our utmost reach. And yet it is as certain that God made the world, as it is certain that effects must have a cause. It is indeed in general no more than effects, that the most knowing are acquainted with: for as to causes, they are as entirely in the dark as the most ignorant. What are the laws by which matter acts upon matter, but certain effects; which some, having observed to be frequently repeated, have reduced to general rules? The real nature and essence of beings likewise is what we are altogether ignorant of. All these things are so entirely out of our reach, that we have not the least glimpse of them. And we know little more of ourselves, than we do of

the world about us: how we were made, how our being is continued and preserved, what the faculties of our minds are, and upon what the power of exercising them depends. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.* Our own nature, and the objects we are surrounded with, serve to raise our curiosity; but we are quite out of a condition of satisfying it. Every secret which is disclosed, every discovery which is made, every new effect which is brought to view, serves to convince us of numberless more which remain concealed, and which we had before no suspicion of. And what if we were acquainted with the whole creation, in the same way and as thoroughly as we are with any single object in it? What would all this natural knowledge amount to? It must be a low curiosity indeed which such superficial knowledge could satisfy. On the contrary, would it not serve to convince us of our ignorance still, and to raise our desire of knowing the nature of things themselves; the author, the cause and the end of them? (FS 15.5)

Imagination is "that forward delusive faculty ever obtruding beyond its sphere, a cause of discontent." (AR 1.1.7)

Interest. We receive pleasure when we obtain the object of desire, but attained or not, all objects of desire, appetite or affection are of short-term or long-term interest.

Liberty. As free will is necessary for moral being, so good civil government and good ecclesiastical government requires liberty in the form of tolerance of conscientious diversity.

Love. The whole system of affections, regards, and respect following from the nature of the lover and the beloved. In Butler the principal loves are that of God for his creation including nature and the human population and the love of humans for self and others, but extending to love of children, of the arts, of one's enemies, of one's country.

Metaphysics. "Newman appears to follow Bishop Butler and to precede Matthew Arnold in using 'metaphysical' as essentially a term of abuse" Leslie Armour, Newman, *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, June 1, 1990.

which does not always have a fixed meaning.

Necessity. Necessity as much requires and supposes a necessary agent, as freedom requires and supposes a free agent.

Passions. For details on the many treatises upon the passions, see Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*. Butler uses variants of "passion" hundreds of times, "emotion" fewer than a dozen.

Piety "Resignation to the will of God is the whole of piety: it includes in it all that is good; and is a source of the most settled quiet and composure of mind. There is the general principle of submission in our nature." FS 14.3)

Pleasure. The pleasure resulting from the satisfaction is often legitimate and contributes to making life worthwhile, but pleasure is not our business in this world, and the pursuit of pleasure may be contrary to self-interest.

Probability. Demonstrative evidence is enough to prove the conclusion or not. Probable evidence, by contrast, admits of degrees, probable evidence supports the conclusion somewhere on the scale of weakly to strongly.

Probation is a trial, difficulty or danger that functions as a temptation to wrong under a system of moral government (AR 1.4.1)

Providence. As governor of the universe, God uses the dispensations of providences so that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." Rom. 8:28

Prudence is the wise pursuit of self-love.

Reason. In Butler's system evidence is first collected to include all relevant evidence arranged as a cumulative case, reason is then used to determine the meaning of the evidence, the degree to which the conclusion is proved or disproved, and whether the accumulated evidence is actionable.

Redemption. "So in this state of general ruin, it is easy for anyone to become lost, distracted, and (as they say) make some bad choices. Such is sin; we miss the mark, and not just once or a few times. We have the testimony of millions and millions of witnesses that you must chance your life, and that you can change your life, and that by changing your life you can hope to avoid the otherwise inevitable consequences of the sins in which you were implicated. But true repentance is not just efficacious, not just some authority having pity on you, true repentance requires deep remorse, profound sorrow for your previous way of life, without excuses and quibbling over whose fault it was and how you were so mistreated as a child, &c, &c. Nor is repentance much concerned with the observances of ceremonial religion. Neither is repentance interested in your declarations of how you are sorry and promise to clean up your act. For repentance to be true, one thing is required: that you dedicate your future life to preaching the Gospel of redemption, that you preach in a clear and strong voice so far as you are able, and that you no longer see it as your concern how you are treated in this temporal and temporary state of being. You have been offered remission. You have accepted remission. What is left is your recognition that remission of given you to be held in trust for the benefit of others and that your mission is to determine how best you, in your present circumstances, can discharge the trust you have received not because of anything you have done right, but because of all you have done wrong. And by the way: you are not alone." (https://www.facebook.com/groups/110088803134238)

Religion, being in a state of. "The general doctrine of religion, that our present life is a state of probation for a future one, comprehends under it several particular things distinct from each other. But the first and most common meaning of it seems to be, that our future interest is now depending, and depending upon ourselves; that we have scope and opportunities here, for that good and bad behaviour, which God will reward and punish" (AR 1.4.1)

Revelation. In Butler's scheme there is a vast field of human ignorance, a smaller range of knowledge gained by the senses, and then some dree of knowledge, especially with regard to the divine dispensation, that is transmitted to us in the form of testimony as a revelation.

Ridicule is considered fallacious and rejected by most recent commentators, but for Butler and his contemporaries being able to withstand the test of ridicule was an acceptable and fair test of seeking the truth.

Self-deceit. The human mind has a tendency play tricks on itself causing the agent to act in ways contrary to self-interest.

Self-love. Neither does there appear any reason to wish self-love were weaker in the generality of the world, than it is. The influence which it has, seems plainly owing to its being constant and habitual, which it cannot but be, and not to the degree or strength of it. Every caprice of the imagination, every curiosity of the understanding, every affection of the heart, is perpetually shewing its weakness by prevailing over it. (Pref.40)

Superstition. Indeed, amongst creatures naturally formed for religion, yet so much under the powers of imagination, so apt to deceive themselves, and so liable to be deceived by others, as men are; superstition is an evil, which can never be out of sight. (SS 1.15)

Theism posits a personal deity who created and rules the world and can interact with the creation, with the kingdom of God. Christianity is a theism, but there are many others.

Trial. “And as the moral government of God, which religion teaches us, implies, that we are in a state of trial with regard to a future world; so also his natural government over us implies, that we are in a state of trial, in a like sense, with regard to the present world. Natural government, by rewards and punishments, as much implies natural trial, as moral government does moral trial. The natural government of God here meant,1 consists in his annexing pleasure to some actions, and pain to others, which are in our power to do or forbear, and in giving us notice of such appointment beforehand. This necessarily implies, that he has made our happiness and misery, or our interest, to depend in part upon ourselves. And so far as men have temptations to any course of action, which will probably occasion them greater temporal inconvenience and uneasiness than satisfaction, so far their temporal interest is in danger from themselves, or they are in a state of trial with respect to it.” (AR 1.4.2)

Vice. But to go on with the explanation of the thing itself: Vice in general consists in having an unreasonable and too great regard to ourselves, in comparison of others. Robbery and murder is never from the love of injustice or cruelty, but to gratify some other passion, to gain some supposed advantage: and it is false selfishness alone, whether cool or passionate, which makes a man resolutely pursue that end, be it ever so much to the injury of another. But whereas, in common and ordinary wickedness, this unreasonableness, this partiality and selfishness, relates only, or chiefly, to the temper and passions, in the characters we are now considering, it reaches to the understanding, and influences the very judgment. And, besides that general want of distrust and diffidence concerning our own character, there are, you see, two things, which may thus prejudice and darken the understanding itself: that overfondness for ourselves, which we are all so liable to; and also being under the power of any particular passion or appetite, or engaged in any particular pursuit. And these, especially the last of the two, may be in so great a degree, as to influence our judgment, even of other persons and their behaviour. Thus, a man, whose temper is formed to ambition or covetousness, shall even approve of them sometimes in others. [FS10.6]

Virtue. Butler endorses the Stoic principle that virtue is following nature.

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