

Bishop Butler and
Logic, Love, and the
Pursuit of Happiness
in the Age of Unreason

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By

David E. White and Michael J. Maranda

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BISHOP BUTLER

With his health failing, Sir Walter Scott
summoned his son-in-law to his bedside.
"I may only have a few minutes with you," he said,
"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."
As quoted in John Gibson Lockhart *Memoirs of the life
of Sir Walter Scott, Bart*, Vol. VII (1838), p. 294

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

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FOREWORD

BY THE RT. REV. DR. PRINCE G. SINGH

-That we may rise to the life immortal. Amen.
-That we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.
-That you let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us. Amen.
-That You may find in us a mansion prepared for You. Amen. -Grant that we may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge. Amen. -Grant that we may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit. Amen. -Finally, Grant that we, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven. Amen.
Prayer is the center of our Advent journey because when I pray, I change and when I change, I can inspire others around me to change, and together we can change the world one person at a time.
From the beginning, God is, was and will be love. The center of advent prayers is CHANGE.
The root motivation for the incarnation is love that changes all things. Makes all things new.
God became human. Mary became a God-bearer. Joseph became a helper.
The Shepherds became evangelists. The Magi became gift bearers.
The Star became a sign. The stable became a home. The manger became sanctuary. Waiting became a longing.
BECOMING continued throughout the life of Jesus.
He came among us. He became one among us.
Water became wine. Fisher folk became leaders.
Women became leaders. Loaves and fish became abundant to all.
The sea became like ground.
The paralytic became the center of healing.
The woman with the issue of blood became well.
The disciples became friends.
The Canaanite woman became a teacher.
The teacher became a servant.
Jesus became the hungry.
Jesus became the thirsty.
Jesus became the naked.
Jesus became the prisoner.
Jesus became the stranger.
The cross became blessing.
Death became a portal.
The tomb became empty.
Our hearts became dwelling places for God.
The Spirit came and became the Helper!

The eternal dance of change and transformation continues. We wait, because God has been waiting for us to show up to this cosmic and temporal dance of life. Jesus came that we may become more like God. Let the dance begin afresh! Let us heal! Let us join God to transform our world together!
Blessed Advent! Don't be afraid! Have a Happy Christmas, a Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

Bishop Singh's Advent Prayer 4 December 2020 (Vimeo.com)

<https://www.episcopalrochester.org/writings?page=3>

Bishop Butler's arms use the covered cup, but the uncovered cup is just as often associated with the Butler name in reference to the importance of wine served by a butler.

For Tom Latin, sadly he died before he had a chance to read this book.

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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.

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, Catholic Worker and 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*, 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 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

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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, University of Pennsylvania, Boston Public Library, Cleveland Public Library, Penn State University, Emory University, Oriel College, King's College Oxford, the Bodleian Library, and Cornell University have provided invaluable assistance and encouragement.

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

Barry Voorhees, Alex Ryan, and Tim Madigan marked-up the entire manuscript catching many errors and infelicities. Bob Heineman provided a helpful review from which we have benefited in revision.

PREFACE

Bishop Butler in the Age of Unreason was written with a diverse readership in mind. To agnostics we offer a full package of belief and practice and a defense of evidential considerations as most relevant in thinking about ethics and religion. To atheists who are able to live without religion and without compromise to their ethical Rule of Life we offer respect. Theists who sincerely assent to the articles of belief and participate in the ceremonial aspects of religion are encouraged to take the final step (or leap) into wholehearted practice as a way of life. And for those who have seen it all and done it all, perhaps since childhood, we supply some suggestions on how to set an even better example and how to testify to greater effect.

Our aim is to know Bishop Butler better so that we can make Bishop Butler better known. We are convinced that any advance in the knowledge of Butler's life and work will be to the benefit of all.

Anyone who lives a life of principle, any principle, is bound to encounter obstacles. We do not pretend to understand why the way is blocked. Our aim is to address the problems real people face every day and show them to be best understood not as objections against living a virtuous and pious life, much less as excuses for vice and impiety, but as inhibitions to be overcome in our time of trial (probation). This book is not intended to satisfy the intellectual needs of academics. We project that such satisfaction, if it comes at all, is still generations away. The modern world, for good or ill, is the only world we have to we act in the present in light of the past guided by intentions for the future. The first humans emerged in the distant past. It took a long time for them to develop the full ensemble of traits that make humanity distinctive. Civilization has played to mixed reviews. Reform movements range from most redemptive to most destructive. Even if we settle on the tacit knowledge and sacred wisdom of the ancients as our guide to life, we still need to flesh out at least some details of what we can know, how we should conduct ourselves, and what we can hope for beyond our personal death. Butler begins and ends his contribution to the conversation of which we are all a part by stressing how great is our ignorance and brief is the time we have to respond to the fragmented ('ruined' he says) human condition as a whole and to the specific situation that is the business of our lives.

In the manner of contemporary philosophy, we are not interested in defending doctrinal claims. We do not present dogmatic assertions to be mimicked. Our interest is in language learning. Beginning with what Butler did with the ordinary language of his time, his condition, and his situation, we want to see what we can do with the vocabulary and its speech acts as they have developed over the past three hundred years. We believe that the theistic, Christian, Anglican, latitudinarian, form of speech and form of life can be subsumed under:

The constitution of man's nature, and how far it supplies to him a rule of conduct and a law of duty, are inquiries than which there can hardly be any others of more importance. They were largely discussed in the Schools of Greece. A hundred vigorous and acute minds of modern Europe have occupied themselves with them. It will hardly be questioned in England that the palm for clear and just thinking on the subject belongs to Bishop Butler, but it will presently be seen that his views and those of Mencius are, as nearly as possible, identical. There is a difference of nomenclature and a combination of parts, in which the advantage is with the Christian prelate. Felicity of illustration and charm of style belong to the Chinese philosopher. The doctrine in both is the same.¹

¹ Mencius, *The Chinese Classics: Translated into English with Preliminary Essays and Explanatory Notes* by James Legge. Vol. 2 *The Life and Teachings of Mencius*. (London: N. Trübner, 1875). Chapter: SECTION II.: HIS INFLUENCE AND OPINIONS. Our main association with Chinese philosophy is thought the International Institute for Field Being.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

Works of Bishop Butler

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	INTRODUCTION TO ANALOGY OF RELIGION 1736
Diss.1	DISSERTATION I ON PERSONAL IDENTITY 1736
Diss.2	DISSERTATION II ON VIRTUE 1736
SS.1739	PUBLIC SERMON 1739 SPG 1739
SS.1740	PUBLIC SERMON 1740 Spital 1740
SS.1741	PUBLIC SERMON 1741 Martyrdom 1741
SS.1745	PUBLIC SERMON 1745 Charity Schools 1745
SS.1747	PUBLIC SERMON 1747 Accession 1747
SS.1748	PUBLIC SERMON 1748 Infirmary 1748
SS.1749	SIX SERMONS COLLECTED 1749
DC	DURHAM CHANGE 1751

Reference Books

EB	Encyclopedia Britannica
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

INTRODUCTION

The world I want begins with me. God works from the inside out. You must first look within yourself to eliminate the fear, the anger, the imbalance in your life. Then and only then can you move forward to create peacefully and powerfully the changes needed in the world.¹

Butler's published works begin with his response to Samuel Clarke's Boyle lectures on the being and attributes of God. A few more personal letters to Clarke were published later. Upon finishing his term as Preacher at the Rolls Chapel, he published fifteen sermons in 1726. These sermons dealt with the passions or loves inherent in human nature. These loves are self-love, love of neighbor, and love of God. The love of God implies a love of nature as God's creation, which we hold in trust. Butler preaches on the supremacy of conscience over the principles of benevolence and of self-love, as well as on the management of particular passions such as resentment, and the failure to govern our tongues, or to avoid the natural tendency to self-deception. The final sermon is a detailed analysis of the human condition stressing that in the vastness of our ignorance we still can know enough to act in accord with our nature and with the presumed original intent of our being. We can know how we are intended to act because we can know that to which we are adapted. Eyes are for seeing so care and protection of our eyes is obligatory. Whether our eyes were created by a supernatural intervention or by a natural process of evolution is irrelevant to our approval or practices regarding the eyes. Similar reasoning applies to all aspects of our human nature and our situation in the environment. Butler's thought is free of speculation regarding what we cannot know. His only concern is that we ought to practice virtue in pursuit of human flourishing. In 1729, Butler added a preface to his published sermons in which he answered various objections that had come to his attention.

Having already dealt with the existence of God, Butler next takes up other topics of natural theology in part one of his *Analogy of Religion*. He does not speculate about life after death but argues that preparing oneself for a future life is actionable. His treatment of issues involving personal

¹ Iyanla Vanzant (@DrIyanlaVanzant on Facebook)

identity is relegated to an appendix. Butler next presents an extended discussion of the moral economy of nature in an attempt to drive home the point that in this life vice is punished, and virtue is rewarded to a large extent but not entirely. Putting the two points together it is reasonable to expect that the tendency of nature in favor of virtue will be continued and expanded in a future life. Next, Butler takes up two standard objections to the theological and moral claims of natural theology. He considers the problem of evil, that the presence of sometimes horrendous evil in this world proves that our natural home was not created by and is not governed by an omnipotent and benevolent being. There is conclusive evidence against the existence of God. Finally, Butler deals with the claim that science (or necessity) provides a full explanation of the world and there is no need to posit a deity. Butler proposes to refute both the appeal to evil and the sufficiency of science as reasons not to believe in God. The second part of the *Analogy* takes up the more important objections to the alleged revelation of God in scripture. Butler also takes up the positive evidence in the form of prophecy and miracles.

Butler's only other publications are six individual public sermons and his charge to the clergy at Durham. The sermon on missions and the Durham charge concern the conduct of clergy as missionaries and as parish priests. Two sermons are political. One commemorates the martyrdom of King Charles I, and the other celebrates King George II's accession to the throne. The remaining three sermons are fund raising efforts on behalf of medical and educational charities.

Each chapter of this book takes up Bishop Butler's ideas regarding an inhibition to the whole-hearted practice of virtue and piety. What Butler claims, and we agree, is that none of the many attacks on religion in general or Christianity in particular is strong enough to convince people of good will and commonsense 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.

Our everyday language has evolved since Butler's time, 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.

Since the 1920s interest in Butler by professional philosophers has focused more on his ethics than his philosophy of religion, a bias favored

by S. T. Coleridge much earlier.² We still live in a time of unsatisfying lifestyles and moral confusion. 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 natural law, and (4) searching the scripture. In philosophy, “follow nature” is a stock phrase referring to the law of nature in general or to the way of life of a species. To follow nature in this sense has nothing to do with a love of the wild or with tree hugging. “[Nathanael] Culverwel was as emphatic as Locke in asserting that the formal obligation of laws does not lie in their inherent rationality but must be sought in a supreme will. Both admitted, it is true, that law presupposes an act of the intellect, also that there is an ‘eternal order of things’ and certain ‘essential features of things’ which set the standard that actions require in order to conform to reason and to become dutiful; but they insisted that it is the will of a law-giver, not his understanding or ‘the right and reason of the case’, which make a law.” The phrase was used by Whichcote and later by Butler.³

Our intent is to brief readers on the state of the evidence regarding living the life of virtue and piety. “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.”⁴ Butler thought it hard enough to discern God’s will in our own lives and 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

² Michael John Kooy, “Disinterested Patriotism: Bishop Butler, Hazlitt and Coleridge’s Quarto Pamphlet of 1798.” *Coleridge Bulletin* New Series 21 (Spring 2003), 55-65.

³ Whichcote, *Aphorisms* (1703), no. 76; Butler, AR.1.vi.; Locke (1988) 40.

⁴ Lloyd (2008), 339.

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. We are subject to rigorous testing in the face of temptation. Our self-consciousness that we are being tested by what we encounter in the whole of life is what effects the change we were seeking to bring about. Thus, nature creates character whether or not there is a God who created nature.

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. These texts were 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 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: what is the Rule of Life?

In the eighteenth-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 English 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 nineteenth century: Emerson, Newman, Sidgwick, and Gladstone.⁵

Butler 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 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 scriptural revelation. Our argument is not for acceptance of these ideas but for 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. Our interest is in seeking

⁵ Those interested in the sermon form in the context of Butler's time may want to consult Farooq (2013) Smith (2007), Lessenich (1972), or Downey (1969).

out people of good will and commonsense who are making a positive contribution to life on Earth.

This book will be useful to:

- Anyone interested in ethics or religion. 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) A recent post relates this sentiment to the ancient Stoics. “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” (online *Daily Stoic* 3/20/2020)
- Anyone looking for a guide to life, or for a firmer grounding for a rule already adopted. (We suspect that Butler’s use of “Rule of Life” is related to the code of discipline or body of regulations observed by a religious order or congregation, but we have been unable to verify Butler’s precise intent.)
- 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 as an advocate and apologist for the Church of England. What Butler had that so many other advocates lack was a primary devotion to seeking the truth without fear of correction.
- Researchers or teachers concerned with philosophical or theological studies or with the work of Wittgenstein and Habermas regarding social communications. For example, Butler’s 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* 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.

The genius of Christianity (on Butler's reading) is that it 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. 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.

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)

Butler 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. (LC.4.3) 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. 'Theism' is not synonymous with 'Christianity' or with 'religion.' There are theistic religions other than Christianity, for example Judaism and 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.

Our work is the continuation of one thread in the huge and grand project of attempting to maintain the supply lines from the deep and indistinct past on to the open texture and fluidity of the future. The one strand of continuity we have chosen to pursue is the philosophical scrutiny of Butler's work as performed in his life and delivered to us by his legacy.

Outside the Scope of Argument

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 support the advocate's positive case. The following "grounds" for disregarding Butler's (or anyone's) position on a serious matter are heard too often and are themselves dismissible as a begging of the question. That is, when offered without elaboration they assume the point at issue. We have no desire to censure the objector, but only the unelaborated objection. These reasons for rejecting Butler and his work all fall to an easily constructed rebuttal. If the opponent claims Butler is too old or too quaint to be worth studying in our time, the advocate can answer that the question before us is *whether* Butler is so old or so quaint as to be useless in the present day, and that the objection as stated assumes he is obsolete and therefore assumes the point at issue, which is to beg the question. This pattern of rebuttal applies to all 15 of the dismissals listed here regardless of whether the subject is Butler or anyone else who has spoken or written on the topics that concern us.

- 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

Those who are unschooled in rhetoric, disputation, or the art of conversation will likely reject the counterclaim of having begged the question and insist the onus is on the affirmative. The defenders of Butler's ideas have, in effect, put their money on the table by engaging in the activity of studying the works of Butler. They have formed themselves into a community that is as a whole and with regard to individuals integrated into the larger commercial and political social order. This activity does not guarantee the association of those who study Butler is secure against the 15 grounds for dismissal, but it does constitute a prima facie case for the legitimacy of studying Butler (or whatever inquiry has captured one's attention). Once a prima facie case has been made out, the burden is on the critics to present objections that are substantive, telling, and factually correct. We claim that these principles of non-violent communication are known to all through common experience. It is not necessary to attend law school to learn the basics of forensics. Hours of conversation in the kitchen, over the backyard fence, or around the cracker barrel will do.

Summation of Butler's whole argument. Butler's material concerns ethics and religion, the content of evidence and argumentation regarding the classical issues still debated in his time. We see his main contribution as having implications for action in ordinary life more than to nominal assent to a proposition.

- 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. His interest is in continuously and dynamically applying the test of practice, of living one's philosophy as a practical matter.
- Butler sees this living practice of philosophy as a test (trial or probation) of the character of the moral agent, a being with a strict and continuous identity from birth (at least) to death (at least) and likely continuing postmortem.

- Butler's main claim and his final conclusion is that our world can be seen as the ideal environment for the development and proving of the moral character of beings such as ourselves.
- If the world and especially the constitution of nature, the ruling principles of human nature (conscience, self-love, benevolence), and the testimony of scripture all seem to guide us in the direction of the good life for humans, then there is no reason left to doubt that we ought to live in accord with virtue and piety, and little reason to deny that we are under the providential care of the original author and eternal governor of the world. The claim of an author and governor of the world is the denial of an ultimate chaos or of an impersonal order with regularities but without purpose or intent. Assent to such a governor does not entail any claim to know the nature or ends of the world system but only that the world is presumably teleological.

Joseph Butler: Logic, Love, & the Pursuit of Happiness in the Age of Unreason is an outcome-oriented (practical) study of the human good. "Outcome-oriented" is our term for the intent to bring about or at least encourage change. Butler defines religion as a practical as opposed to speculative matter. He compares the outcomes of the presentation of his arguments with the effect of a work of architecture or of any art.

Notes on Butler's Methods and Ours

1. Butler was a human being (1692-1752) with a unique personal identity. He argued for the possible extension of his (or anyone's) personal identity beyond death. (AR.1.1) Our minimal sketch of his life is intended to acknowledge and make explicit our point of view as writers, how we see Butler as a flesh and blood person and to emphasize how readily his personality dissolves into a field of forces. All that remains is the moral worth of the personal identity commonly known as "Bishop Butler." Butler and his contemporaries saw the world in terms of ancients and moderns, but we necessarily add to the early modern of Butler, a late modern beginning in the nineteenth century, the time at which Butler got the most attention. Thus, the philosophy of the early twenty-first century is dominated by ideas derived from those separated from Butler by at least a century: Darwin, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. Our thesis is best understood not as of the past as he knew it or in terms of the future as it knew him but as a bridge allowing for commerce between the ancients and moderns of the past

and the future generations yet to come and whose world is being created by them and us and including memorials such as this book.

2. Our concern is religion and ethics, a vast subject matter perhaps best defined by ostension, for example, James Hastings, editor, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-1926). As having implications and incentives for practice our work is addressed to those who live in the spirit of the great commandment to love God wholeheartedly and to love self and neighbor equally. In this book “virtuous” is the word most often used for living the life of love for self and neighbor, and “pious” refers to loving God as a way of life. The result of living this kind of life is that one becomes a good person and flourishes as such. One can search for gold and search well even if no gold exists in the area of the search. So too, one can live in the love of God even if God is an illusion or an ideal with no real existence. Even the saints, like Anselm of Canterbury, who tried to prove the existence of God did so only after they had lived a devout life.

3. Our method is empirical and evidence-based, as was Butler’s. We read Butler as a pastoral philosopher. That is, his philosophical reflections begin with real issues and objections raised by those who aim to live the good life. Perhaps they are unconvinced that it is virtue and piety that lead to happiness. Perhaps they are distracted by powerful passions or self-deception. Whatever the inhibition that prevents them from flourishing, guided philosophical reflection may be able to help. The reflection ends not when some speculative problem is solved but when the real and persistent inhibition gives way to fullness of life. The pastoral philosopher guides people, usually by dialogic interactions more than by didaction, in the way best in accord with the client’s best interest. The methods favored by professional philosophy and the social sciences are relevant here since ordinary people are so often misled by the supposed teachings of the more refined writers whose works are inaccessible to the public. Pastoral philosophy is philosophical in the classic sense of pursuing wisdom wherever it appears. This philosophy has no respect for academic or artistic compartmentalization. The court of reason is concerned with the source of data only for purposes of authentication. Imaginative literature, fiction, poetry, the social sciences, modern legal, commercial, and medical practice, critical and historical studies, the physical and life sciences can all be brought to bear with regard to a specialization and to the more inclusive disciplines of natural science, moral philosophy, and biblical theology. Such study serves the larger society by encouraging liberty and equality. It benefits individuals by providing some security against the failure of nerve now chronic throughout the world.

4. We attempt to reconstruct Butler's point of view as a leading candidate for determining how future generations will relate to their biological and cultural ancestors. Butler understood all he had inherited—possessions, knowledge, powers—as to be held in trust for the benefit of all. Since the appearances in this world are sometimes contrary to this vision, this world presents us with a test, a trial of whether we are able to keep our heart. For Butler, appearances to the contrary of one's preferred vision are neither to be dismissed nor quibbled with. The alleged deceptions that virtue can be reduced to utility, that conscience is always reliable, or that we cannot be held responsible for what we cannot control, are to be taken seriously, analyzed with care, and only then evaluated with an open mind.

5. Whatever our prejudices may be, Butler and the people for whom he was writing saw virtue and piety as much needed both for society and for the individual and as constitutive of human nourishing, i.e., as allowing us to become what we were meant to be.

6. All this talk in the language of human moral development, of character building, is grounded in the pleasing notion that within human nature resides an image of the sacred. The slave, the enemy, and the impoverished are all equal in relation to the supreme being and should be treated as such. Butler takes up three prominent features of our human nature which give us good reason to doubt our divine origin and end. Self-deception and hypocrisy are unbecoming in anyone, and impossible for beings in the image of the divine.

7. The goods of this world and the ambitions and opportunities to prosper appear to be distributed without regard to justice. We cannot expect to participate in the justice of the moral economy of this world until we attain a clear vision of how that justice is being played out. Butler saw God as the Supreme Governor who ruled through the Kings, who presided over their nobility, and so on through the clergy and the gentry over the lower classes, the women, the children, and slaves. Butler had few reservations about the prevailing social order, just as he approved the hierarchic order of human nature, and as he claimed we know too little to question the justice of the natural order. The questions that interested him were specific and practical: how are we to live in the here and now so far as the here and now can be understood as accommodated to those who live lives of virtue and piety? What passed without question for Butler, and can still pass unquestioned for us, is the obligation to pursue justice in ourselves and in the wider society. Our understanding of the natural system and the associated psycho/social system must be taken critically in accord with the providential order of heaven.