

ART. V.—FOUR GREAT PREBENDARIES OF
SALISBURY.

JOSEPH BUTLER.

IN the appendix to the life of the author, prefixed to Bishop Fitzgerald's valuable edition of the "Analogy," there is a letter from Mr. Fitzherbert Macdonald, long connected with the diocese of Salisbury, containing three interesting entries from the Diocesan Register as to Bishop Butler. On October 26, 1718, Joseph Butler, B.A., of Oriel College, was ordained deacon in the Palace Chapel by Bishop Talbot, who in the same year, on St. Thomas' Day, admitted him to the priesthood in St. James', Westminster. Three years afterwards Butler was collated to the Prebend of Yetminster Prima, which he held until the year 1738, when he was appointed to the bishopric of Bristol. Among the many projects which flitted through the busy brain of Robert Southey was an intention of writing a memoir of Butler, to accompany a complete edition of his writings. It is well known that Butler in his will desired all his sermons, letters, and papers should "be burnt" without being read by anyone. But it is equally certain that some, at least, must have been preserved, and that the story told by the late Mr. Bagehot in his very interesting essay on Butler is well-founded. The wife of a country clergyman, he says, calmly and deliberately consumed in household purposes the contents of a box supposed to be sermons of Bishop Butler's. The fate of the first volume of Mr. Carlyle's "French Revolution" will be remembered by all who have read Mr. Froude's Life. It is, perhaps, however, consoling to remember that Butler was a stern critic of his own writings, and he certainly had no particular affection for the "Analogy" and the sermons, written, as he tells us so often, simply from a desire to induce readers to adopt a more careful method in reading and thinking than commonly prevailed in his time. Many years ago Mr. Chretien printed at the end of a letter to Professor Maurice an extract from "Byrom's Journal," containing an account of a conversation with Bishop Butler at a supper party. It is a delightful piece of what may be called Boswellism. The hesitating utterances of Butler, indicative, however, of the intense faith and deep conviction which seem to have been as apparent in his conversation as in his writings, fully bear out what Mr. Bagehot has so well said, that the very imperfections of his style create a feeling that it is very hard indeed to differ from such a patient seeker after truth. There is a pleasant account also of the charm of Butler's society in a letter of Miss Talbot's in the memoirs of Mrs. Carter. She calls him "the kind, affectionate

friend, the faithful adviser, the most delightful companion from a delicacy of thinking, an extreme politeness, a vast knowledge of the world, and a something peculiar to be met with in nobody else."

With the exception of the touching yet formal letters of Dr. Forster, written from Bath, in Butler's last days, these few scanty notices are nearly all we possess of the distinction and charm which seem to have made Butler as unique in the domestic history of the last century as he is in the great gallery of English divines. It is true, as Bishop Fitzgerald says, that Butler would hardly have tolerated such a companion as the inquisitive Boswell, but it is impossible not to long for more information than the life of Mr. Bartlett and the ordinary notices of Butler's life afford.

He was born at Wantage on May 18, 1692. His father was a retired linendraper. He was the youngest of eight children, and the discovery that the boy had talent determined the father to send him to the Dissenting Academy at Gloucester, where Samuel Jones had won considerable reputation. Thomas Butler was a Presbyterian, and his desire was that his son should enter the ministry of his communion. Among Jones' pupils were a namesake of his own, author of a book on the Canon of the New Testament; Lardner, the learned and sagacious writer; Maddox, afterwards Bishop of Worcester; Chandler, the apologist; and Secker, the well-known archbishop, the life-long friend and admirer of Butler. From his master Butler derived the taste for metaphysics, which induced him at twenty-one to address letters to Samuel Clarke on his celebrated treatise. There are certainly very few juvenile productions more remarkable than these letters. The modesty and dignity with which Butler urged his objections made a great impression upon his correspondent, and there is no doubt that Butler's declaration that he "designed the search after truth as the business of his life," induced Clarke in after-years to exert his influence in favour of Butler's appointment to the preachiership of the Rolls.

No great objection seems to have been raised by Thomas Butler when he found that his son was bent on conforming to the Established Church. Conferences with some Presbyterian ministers were held, but the father at last agreed to enter him at Oriel on March 17, 1714. The late Provost of Oriel believed that Butler's aversion to extemporary prayer, and his opinion that with episcopacy a liturgy had always been found, were the determining causes of his relinquishment of the Presbyterian communion. This Dr. Hawkins gave on the authority of his predecessor in the Provostship, Bishop Coplestone, of Llandaff. It was at Oxford that Butler formed his friendship with Edward Talbot, and it was to Talbot's father that he certainly owed his

first opportunity of distinction. Talbot on his death-bed recommended Butler and Secker to his father's care. It was not in vain. In 1721 the two friends were presented to livings, and in 1725 Talbot transferred Butler from Houghton, where he had begun to embarrass himself with his only expensive taste, building, to the rich benefice of Stanhope, which he held for many years. Preferment in the last century was often abused. Elevations like those of Butler and Secker are redeeming features in the history of an arid and somewhat repulsive period. Ill-natured critics have often said that dispensers of power have sometimes cleverly diverted attention from neglect and nepotism, by occasionally bestowing places of distinction upon men of ability. Be this as it may, it is certain that in Butler's case preferment came at the very time when it was most needed. The small income of the Prebend of Yetminster must have been a pleasant addition to the salary of the Chaplain of the Rolls, and during the seven years spent at Stanhope the greater part of the "Analogy" was composed. The appointment to the chaplaincy of the Lord Chancellor Talbot and a stall at Rochester came in the year 1736, and in the same year Queen Caroline made Butler Clerk of the Closet, and imposed upon him the duty of being present at the remarkable evening debates, when her Majesty refreshed herself after the cares of business with the intellectual contests of some picked divines. But a greater event than any preferment took place in 1736. This was the publication of the "Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature."

Queen Caroline died the year after the publication of the "Analogy." It was from Butler's hands that she received for the last time the Holy Communion, and her opinion of his merits was afforded by her earnest recommendation to the King to promote her Clerk of the Closet. In 1738 Butler was appointed to the poorest of English bishoprics, Bristol. In 1740 the Deanery of St. Paul's fell vacant. Butler was nominated, and resigned the living of Stanhope. In 1750, at the age of fifty-eight, he accepted the bishopric of Durham, and he died at Bath on June 16, 1752. He was buried in the Cathedral at Bristol. The account of his last days in the brief and formal letters of Dr. Forster is full of sadness. There is something wonderfully pathetic in the passage in which Bishop Benson describes his last days. "The last time I went in to the Bishop I found both his understanding and speech, after a little sleep he had had, more perfect than they were before. This made my taking leave so much the more painful. It must be, as he with a good deal of emotion said, 'a farewell for ever,' and said kind and affecting things more than I could bear. I had a great deal of time afterwards for melancholy, but I hope useful, reflection

when alone in my journey, and which I was very glad gave me opportunity of being alone." Bishop Fitzgerald has given the most circumstantial shape of the story told of Butler's last moments. "When Bishop Butler lay on his death-bed he called for his chaplain, and said, 'Though I have endeavoured to avoid sin and to please God to the utmost of my power, yet, from the consciousness of perpetual infirmities, I am still afraid to die.' 'My Lord,' said the chaplain, 'you have forgotten that Jesus Christ is a Saviour.' 'True,' was the answer, 'but how shall I know that He is a Saviour for me?' 'My lord, it is written, him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' 'True,' said the Bishop, 'and I am surprised that though I have read that Scripture a thousand times over, I never felt its virtue till this moment, and now I die happy.' This is from a collection of anecdotes illustrative of the Assembly's Catechism, of which I know not that the authorship can be fixed with any certainty. Substantially the same story is related in the life of Mr. Venn, upon that gentleman's authority. But the primary source of the tradition I have found it impossible to discover. That there occurs no notice of it in Forster's, is, however, hardly a presumption against its truth, considering all the circumstances. What is wanting is direct testimony." It is impossible to help wishing for more direct testimony, but the simplicity of the Bishop's words is in such complete keeping with the modesty of the letter which he wrote to a friend on his appointment to the bishopric of Durham as to make us feel a strong belief in the authenticity of the story. There is a beautiful passage in the charge to the clergy of Durham, "On Secret Prayer," which leaves on the mind an intense impression of the quiet fervour of Butler's spiritual life. We long to know more of the inner thoughts of one who is unconsciously adducing his own practice when he says, "If besides our more set devotions, morning and evening, all of us would fix upon certain times of the day, so that the return of the hour should remind us to say short prayers, or exercise our thoughts in a way equivalent to this, perhaps there are few persons in so high and habitual a state of piety as not to find the benefit of it. If it took up no more than a minute or two, or even a less time than that, it would serve the end I am proposing; it would be a recollection that we are in the Divine presence, and contribute to our 'being in the fear of the Lord all the day long.'"

Surtees, in his history of Durham, tells us that during the short time Butler held the see, he conciliated all hearts. He was munificent in his charities. His mode of living was plain. His taste for building was interrupted by his illness. A stone bearing his name, and evidently intended for some prominent position, was discovered by the last Bishop of Durham, who

gave it a place in the garden, and added a few words of his own in choice Latin. Many years ago an old woman, who lived to an unusual age, told Dean Wellesley that her father had been in Bishop Butler's service, and had received from him a Bible, with the words, "I hope you will love it as well as I do."

The reputation of Bishop Butler as an authority in morals was perhaps even greater in his own lifetime than in any succeeding years. We know from the life of Hume how anxious that philosopher was to obtain Bishop Butler's criticism for his early writings. The position which he held in his own generation many recent critics have attempted to lower. Mr. Leslie Stephen and the late Mr. Matthew Arnold have endeavoured to attack his conclusions. "Butler," says the former, "was no philosopher, and his mind, like the mind of every recluse, was apt to run in grooves." Mr. Arnold, again, declares "that the 'Analogy,' though a work of great power, is for all real intents and purposes now a failure." Yet the same critics are obliged to admit that "Butler remains the deepest moralist of the century," and "that to read the 'Analogy' is a very valuable exercise." The truth seems to be that Butler's great productions have perhaps suffered from the overpraise of too fervid critics. Admirers of his genius may well be content to remember that John Henry Newman looked upon the study of Butler's "Analogy" as an era in his religious opinions, and that the father of John Stuart Mill declared that the argument of the "Analogy" was conclusive, against the only opponents for whom it was intended. It will be a deplorable thing for England, and the future of England, if the study of Butler's writings should ever become obsolete. Thirteen years ago Mr. Eaton, whose Bampton Lecture on the "Permanence of Christianity" gave evidence of his faithful adherence to Butler's methods, published two lectures on "Butler and his Critics," which contain an admirable refutation of much that has been urged against Butler's place as a philosopher and divine. No one has ever really invalidated the declarations of Chalmers and Mackintosh, that in morals Butler may rightly be called a discoverer. "With him," says Whewell, "conscience was a faculty, if you choose; but a faculty as reason is a faculty; a power, by exercising which we may come to discern truths, not a repository of truths already collected in a visible shape." This most happily expresses the exact nature of Butler's view, a view which has been enforced with extraordinary vigour by Bishop Temple, in his well-known Bampton Lectures. The hesitating, tentative utterances of Butler sometimes lead hasty readers to form a low estimate of his real ability. But as F. D. Maurice says: "Butler's words often become feeble and contradictory, because he cannot write what is struggling within him.

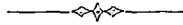
Butler, like every great and generative thinker, has the power of adapting himself to circumstances and conditions, which he did not contemplate, and which did not exist in his day." Bishop Hampden claims for Butler the application of the true spirit of the philosophy of Bacon to theology. It is quite certain that those who hold, to use the words of Mr. Froude, "that the world has been generated by the impersonal forces of nature, cannot be approached by any argument which Butler has to offer." If it be admitted that the Cosmos originated in the decree of an active and anticipating intelligence, such as Professor Owen tells us we must regard the Great Cause of all, there is still room for the introduction of Butler's great argument. It is well to remember the words of Bacon: "So far are physical causes from withdrawing men from God and Providence, that, contrariwise, those philosophers who have been occupied in searching them out, can find no issue but by resorting to God and Providence at last."

Upon this subject Mr. Eaton makes an admirable defence of Butler, and quotes with great felicity the remarks of John Stuart Mill, in the three essays published after his death, where he admits that the adaptations in Nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence. The argument as to final causes has not yet said its last word, and the appeal which Butler makes constantly, to what he calls matter of fact, has still a right to be heard. No one can read the fourth chapter of the second part of the "Analogy" without feeling convinced that this great thinker had actually in his mind the germ of much with which we are now familiar under the names of Development and Evolution. Surely the fact that Butler assumes along with the men of his generation the existence of an Almighty Creator of the world, ought not to deprive him of a fair hearing in the present day. Butler has certainly, as Mr. Eaton says, suggested "one way of solving this great enigma of existence—a way so far from being so unscientific that it is altogether compatible with the phenomena." There is much in the present temper of the times to justify a more complete study of both parts of Butler's great work. It is not too much to say that some at least of the novel, which for a time attained considerable popularity, could hardly have been written if the writer had been familiar with all that Butler says on the subject of testimony, and the particular evidence for Christianity. Of the way in which Butler sometimes marvelously anticipates possible objections, a specimen may here be given. "There may be incidents in Scripture which, taken alone in the naked way they are told, may appear strange, especially to persons of other manners, temper, education; but there are also incidents of undoubted truth in many, or most

persons' lives, which in the same circumstances would appear to be full as strange." There, as Bishop Fitzgerald shows, we have the germ of Archbishop Whately's clever *Historic Doubts*, and the same idea is worked out by Dr. Johnson, in his denial that Canada had been taken, which he said he could support by good arguments.

It is time to conclude. There is always a temptation to those who are connected with a great cathedral to dwell too much upon the temporary connection which men like Hooker and Pearson, Barrow and Butler, have had with a foundation which still, however, possesses a life and distinction of its own. Cathedrals may, for all we know, undergo great alterations and be subjected to many changes. But if the list of canons and prebendaries is still to receive additions, it is devoutly to be hoped that some few at least may emulate, if they do not possess, the quiet confidence which Hooker felt in the future of the English Church, the intense faith and clear logic of Pearson, the complete control and mental vigour of Barrow, and the patient, humble, truth-loving, peace-seeking spirit of Butler.

G. D. BOYLE.



ART. VI. — BROTHERHOODS, GUILDS AND CONFRATERNITIES.

THE suggested revival among us of brotherhoods, confraternities and other bodies more or less derived from, or connected with, the monastic system, cannot but be regarded with anxiety even by those who are ready to merge every difference of plan or opinion in the endeavour to solve the great problem, "How are the masses of the population which have so far outgrown the ordinary appliances of the Church to be brought under its influence and allured to its communion?" It is generally assumed (though it has never been satisfactorily proved) that the parochial organization has so entirely failed, as to render its extension in any form, or even its adaptation to the altered circumstances of the Church, altogether inadequate to so vast a work; and that we must at once adopt the system of communities, brotherhoods and corporate organizations, regardless of the experience of the past, and looking only to the circumstances of the present need and the dangers which are threatening us in the future. We are beginning already to hear of vows or promises in