

**THE VOICE OF THE OUTCAST:
JOSEPHINE BUTLER'S BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
& PUBLIC THEOLOGY**

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis argues that Josephine Butler cannot be understood as a campaigner and biblical interpreter apart from her core self-understanding as 'the voice of the outcast'. Part One, 'The Making of a Prophet', demonstrates that Butler's chosen term 'outcast' has a biblical background and explores the key influence of anti-slavery on her interpretation of Scripture. Her husband George's biblical interpretation is shown to be an important but previously overlooked parallel to her own. The close relationship and theological affinity she had with the women of the Salvation Army is seen to result in important developments in their mutual thought and praxis. Part Two, 'The Voice of a Prophet', analyses her innovative gendered exegesis and its application to the critical issue of the day – the sexual double standard. Parallels between the interpretative techniques she employed and those of later women bible interpreters like Phyllis Tribble are explored. Parallels with Womanist and Mujerista readings on behalf of the oppressed are delineated. Butler is seen to be a radical prophetic voice in the public sphere who deliberately and subversively interpreted Scripture into the culture of her day to demand inclusion of the outcast and challenge the standards of church and state.

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It remains for me to attempt the impossible task of expressing my gratitude to Iwan, which I will only do in the time honoured manner: “This very good husband for me this” – a sentiment that Butler often expressed of George but in more eloquent though not more heartfelt language.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Iwan Russell-Jones who helped me more than I can say throughout my PhD studies ‘i weld y bore wawr, dros y bryniau tywyll niwlog’, and those mountains of words.

It is also dedicated in memory of Mair Russell-Jones (1917-2013) who taught him to see and who, recognising another remarkable woman, took a great interest in Josephine.

**THE VOICE OF THE OUTCAST:
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& PUBLIC THEOLOGY**

Introduction		1
PART ONE		
THE MAKING OF A PROPHET		
Chapter One	The Voice of the Outcast	37
Chapter Two	Am I Not A Woman and a Sister? Butler's Anti-Slavery Heritage	78
Chapter Three	A Class of Sinners	111
Chapter Four	Not of the Church of England	132
PART TWO		
THE VOICE OF A PROPHET		
Chapter Five	The Typical Acts of Christ the Dangerous Leveller	187
Chapter Six	The Typical Tragedy	209
Chapter Seven	The Typical Sin or Crime of the Universe	235
Chapter Eight	The Typical Outcast	261
Conclusion		312
Bibliography		323

PART ONE

THE MAKING OF A PROPHET

INTRODUCTION

The Voice of the Outcast

With the naming of Josephine Butler College by Durham University, the 1981 lament of Elizabeth Longford can no longer apply: ‘Mrs. Fawcett was created a Dame; Dr. Garrett Anderson has a hospital named after her...’ ‘Yet where are Mrs. Butler’s honours?’¹ Nevertheless, written seventy five years after Butler’s death, Longford’s explanation as to why Butler had not been honoured is still undoubtedly valid: Josephine Butler ‘did not champion the “right women”’.² Butler became famous, or infamous, for campaigning on behalf of outcast women who had fallen foul of the sexual double standard in Victorian society.

Passionate as Butler was about gaining greater opportunities for girls and women in the spheres of education and work,³ she was convinced that if the sexual double standard were not tackled it would be like ‘building a beautiful house on top of a bad drain’: there would be a ‘fatal poison’ in the foundations.⁴ Hence, despite the important work she had done in the field of education through writing and presenting the memorial which persuaded Cambridge University to authorise examinations to ‘test and attest’ the abilities of women thus paving the way for the women’s colleges,⁵ Butler turned instead to an open attack on the double standard, convinced that others would carry on the work in the field of education, but

¹ Elizabeth Longford, E., *Eminent Victorian Women* (London, 1981), p.109

² Longford (1981) p.109

³ See *The Education and Employment of Women* (Liverpool, 1868)

⁴ *The Dawn* (January 1893) No.17, p.2

⁵ *Memorial on behalf of the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women* (1868). [Held by Cambridge University Library, classmark: UA Grace Book Sigma p.359*]

‘who would care to go down to the deeper and more hidden work and to encounter the special difficulties, the disgust and the sorrow which met us *there?*’⁶

She said that those who did not believe in the moral reclaimability of prostitutes ‘call them by all kinds of ugly and ungracious names’,⁷ and she was deeply grieved ‘that even enlightened people will contrive to mass all these women into one great class, labelled with the ugly name of prostitute’.⁸ Butler believed that she was ‘called... to walk side by side, hand in hand, with the outcast’ woman.⁹

Accepting the invitation to lead the Ladies National Association to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts,¹⁰ Butler waged a sixteen year battle to end state regulated prostitution until the British Parliament finally repealed the Acts in 1886. By this time her campaign had spread with national organisations in several European countries, supported by the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice,¹¹ fighting to end state regulated prostitution. Concern about the prostitution of young girls and about trafficking led to a further campaign to expose the practice of selling girls into prostitution. The resulting ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ scandal in 1883 led to raising the age of consent in Britain from twelve to sixteen. A sustained campaign was also mounted to oppose the practice of the British authorities setting up and regulating brothels in India patronised by the British armed forces.

Through the connections of her father and other family members, and through her own

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *The Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes, read by Mrs. Josephine Butler at a Conference of Delegates held at Freemason's Tavern, May 5&6, 1870* (London, 1870) in J. Jordan, & I.E. Sharp, (eds.), *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, 5 volumes (London, 2003) vol 1, pp.121-127, p.122.

⁸ *ibid.* p.124

⁹ *Mrs. Butler's Appeal to the Women of America* (New York, 1888), pp.7-8

¹⁰ Henceforward referred to as the LNA and the CDAs

¹¹ Henceforward referred to as the federation

campaigns, she knew many prominent people. Her husband, George Butler, included Matthew Arnold, Benjamin Jowett, John Ruskin and F. D. Maurice amongst his friends.¹² The Butlers met Gladstone on various occasions,¹³ and on one of them, Josephine challenged him to support her campaign.¹⁴ She met Victor Hugo (1802-1885)¹⁵ and Guiseppe Garibaldi(1807-1882)¹⁶ and both spoke highly of her. Butler addressed some of the most powerful men of the Victorian world and, arguably, had the greatest single impact of any woman of her day in advancing the cause of women's equality, as she lectured politicians, campaigned in elections and galvanized women to support their 'sisters'.¹⁷

Butler's Christian faith played a vital role in her espousal of the cause of the women she called 'outcast'. She was convinced that

'The soul of the most forlorn outcast was redeemed by Christ, and is dear to Him. Most certainly the souls of women are as precious to God as the souls of men.'¹⁸

She also stated,

'I fear it may be said as truly now as it was long ago to persons who contemptuously speak of outcast women as a hopeless class – "The publicans and the harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before you."¹⁹

¹² See *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892) pp.31, 195, 157

¹³ *ibid* pp.106, 129, 271

¹⁴ *ibid* p.297

¹⁵ *Recollections* (1892) p.284

¹⁶ *Recollections* (1892) pp.337,338

¹⁷ See Jordan (2001) p.209, pp.122-124; G.W. Johnson & L. A. Johnson (eds.), *Josephine E. Butler: An Autobiographical Memoir* (London, 1909) p.109;

¹⁸ *The Hour Before the Dawn. An Appeal to Men* (London, 1876) in Jordan, J. & Sharp, I. E. (eds.), *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, 5 volumes (London, 2003), vol.3 pp.243-308, p.260. Where possible Butler's works will be cited from this collection – hereafter referred to as Jordan and Sharp – for ease of reference. If no author is stated in the footnote, the work is by Josephine E. Butler

¹⁹ *Hour Before the Dawn* (1876), pp.243-308, p.260

The central question this thesis is trying to address is the significance of the term outcast for Butler and of seeing herself as the voice of the outcast. Rather than exploring Butler through the lens of denominational history or Evangelical history *per se*, this thesis looks at Butler on her own terms in all her complexity and originality, anchored around her stated self-identification as ‘the voice of the outcast’, ‘her representative’, taking seriously both her religious beliefs and her understanding of the Bible which moulded them, setting them against the background of the other cultural, political, social, familial and circumstantial cross-currents which were no less important in shaping her biblical interpretation and public theology.

A major focus will be the influence of Butler’s anti-slavery heritage. Her father’s influence as an abolitionist who based his opposition to slavery on his understanding of the Bible has been widely acknowledged but what more can be said about the influences on Butler from her family, from anti-slavery literature and from the Transatlantic network of abolitionists? Particular attention will be paid to exploring the influence of women on Butler and to how her anti-slavery standpoint was expressed in her biblical interpretation and her characterisation of the outcast.

A second major focus will be exploring what Butler meant by describing her time in Oxford as ‘the seedtime’ of which her later work was ‘a kind of harvest’.²⁰ The nature of prostitution in this particular location and its relationship to the university will be explored. The work and publications of Butler’s contemporary Felicia Skene who was similarly concerned about the double standard will be used to amplify what can be said about prostitution in Oxford and female Christian reaction to it. The importance of the

²⁰ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Her Niece Edith Leupold, 8th March 1867, in Jordan & Sharp, vol.1, pp.82-88, p.83

Butlers being at the heart of an influential network of men who were scholars, thinkers, artists, leading clergymen and politicians will be emphasised. However, it will not be the focus of this thesis to situate Butler's biblical interpretation in the ongoing debates about higher criticism in these circles but rather to explore how the attitude of these men to the double standard influenced Butler's biblical interpretation and praxis. An important aspect of this will be analysing the hitherto ignored biblical interpretation of George Butler as expressed in his sermons. The question must be asked as to whether his biblical interpretation with regard to the outcast resembled that of Josephine and if it is possible to say who influenced whom.

A third major focus will be researching and evaluating the nature of Butler's relationship to the Christian church. Previous work which has centred on whether she is best described as an Evangelical Anglican will be re-evaluated, not through juxtaposing this with her mysticism, but through an examination of her own words, both published and private, about who she aligned herself with. Butler's affinity with Catherine of Siena has received attention but what about her other publications about the Salvation Army and Pastor Oberlin?

Butler has been hailed as a significant woman Bible interpreter. How does knowledge of her history contextualise her biblical interpretation, amplify appreciation of it and necessitate modification of what has already been said about it? Similarly, Butler has been hailed as a significant Victorian feminist reformer. How does knowledge of her biblical interpretation inform a more nuanced understanding of her contribution to feminist causes?

It is the contention of this thesis that Josephine Butler cannot be understood as a campaigner and biblical interpreter apart from her core self-understanding as the voice of the outcast. This thesis examines the influences on her biblical interpretation and also analyses her exegesis and application of what, for her, were key biblical texts. In this way the important and innovative nature of her biblical interpretation and the centrality of her self-understanding as the voice of the outcast will be demonstrated.

It is necessary next to turn to a consideration of historiographic and methodological influences on this thesis.

History of Butler Interpretation

The facts of Butler's contemporary fame or notoriety, subsequent swift disappearance from the national consciousness and the historians' purview, followed by a new surge of interest as feminist historians rediscovered her, are clear. As well as the fifteen pages of tributes to the 'Venerated Founder' published by the British committee of the Federation and largely reprinted from newspapers,²¹ Butler was chosen by George Watts (1817-1904) as one of those who made the century and her portrait hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.²² Nevertheless, when Joseph Williamson became interested in her in the second half of the 20th Century, 'no one else seemed to have heard of her'.²³ Then, around the time of the centenary of Butler's death, the publication of a five-

²¹ *The Shield*, 'Newspaper Biographies of Mrs. Butler & Press Notices of Her Death', New Series Vol.X:92 (Jan 1907), pp.2-16

²² 'Josephine Elizabeth Butler (née Grey)' by George Frederic Watts, Oil on canvas, 1895. See <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitExtended/mw00969/Josephine-Elizabeth-Butler-ne-Grey> (accessed 10/10/2013)

²³ Joseph Williamson, *Josephine Butler: The Forgotten Saint* (Leighton Buzzard, 1977), p.10

volume collection of documents associated with Butler's campaigns,²⁴ a major biography,²⁵ and two collections of articles,²⁶ testified to her significance and to a renewed interest in assessing her place in history.

Butler was established as an important focus of women's history at the beginning of the 1980s by second wave feminist historians. Judith Walkowitz, in her ground-breaking book on prostitution and Victorian society, stated that the

'public controversy surrounding the Contagious Diseases Acts constitutes a fascinating chapter in the history of class and gender relations in mid-Victorian Britain'.²⁷

In contrast to the earlier works by Butler's admiring contemporaries, the suffrage leader Millicent Garrett Fawcett and the journalist W. T. Stead,²⁸ Walkowitz placed the repeal campaign in its detailed historical setting through careful contextualisation and sequencing of events. As Walkowitz put it, her work from the 1980s also successfully questioned

'certain myths about prostitution handed down from the Victorian era: that prostitution was a question of working- class supply and middle-class demand; that prostitutes were social outcasts, irrevocably cut off from a community of the laboring poor; that the wages of sin were death.'²⁹

²⁴ J. Jordan, & I. E. Sharp, (eds.), *Josephine Butler and the Prostitution Campaigns: Diseases of the Body Politic*, 5 volumes (London, 2003)

²⁵ Jordan (2001)

²⁶ J. Dagers and D. Neal (eds.) *Sex Gender and Religion – Josephine Butler Revisited* (New York, 2006); and Alison Milbank (ed.), *Beating the Traffic: Josephine Butler and Anglican Social Action Today* (Winchester, 2007)

²⁷ J. R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge, 1980), p.1. See also J. R. Walkowitz,, 'The Making of an Outcast Group: Portraits of Working Women in 19th Century Plymouth and Southampton' in Martha Vicinus, *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women* (Indiana, 1980), pp.72-93

²⁸ M. G Fawcett & E. M. Turner, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and Their Meaning for the 20th Century* (London, 1927 - reprinted 2002); W. T. Stead, *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch* (London, 1887)

²⁹ J. R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London,1992), p.7

Through her earlier work and her later *City of Dreadful Delight*, she amplified the picture of how, through

‘the feminist politics of prostitution, middle-class women inserted themselves into the public discussion of sex to an unprecedented extent, using access to new public spaces and to new journalistic practices to speak out against men’s double lives, their sexual diseases, and their complicity in a system of vices that flourished in the undergrowth of respectable society.’³⁰

Furthermore, Walkowitz also gave a detailed analysis of the backgrounds of the women involved in leadership of the LNA, including their religious allegiances. However, the nature of their religious motivation was not developed, nor their use of the Bible, since Walkowitz focused on class and gender issues but not on religion.³¹ She endorsed the view that 19th Century sexuality had a history and was ‘a contested site for other struggles and social divisions, particularly those of class, gender, and race.’³² However, sexuality was also an important contested site for religion. Walkowitz argued that the

‘historian’s task still remains to explain cultural expressions in terms of “historically situated authorial consciousness” and to track how historic figures mobilized existing cultural tools,’

before going on to give Butler as an example of one such historic figure she had written about.³³ However, religious discourse and applied biblical interpretation were common cultural tools in the 19th Century; tools widely used by Butler which cannot be discounted and left unconsidered. They formed an important part of her critique of existing attitudes and ethical behaviour and were employed by her to propose ideal standards.

³⁰ *ibid* p.6

³¹ Walkowitz (1980) pp.123, 124. See also Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford, 1979). Caine’s subject matter was similarly Victorian women on the public stage, ‘each of whom led a major feminist campaign’. However in examining the nature of their feminism she shed little light on their religious influences.

³² Walkowitz (1992) p.8

³³ *ibid* p.9, quoting Gabrielle Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text’, *Speculum* 65, no.1 (January 1990), 59-86

Paul McHugh publishing at the same time as Walkowitz noted the political advantage to Butler's cause of 'enlisting the support of religion to emphasise the validity' of 'an immovably high moral standard'.³⁴ However, as this quotation demonstrates, his primary focus was the way this political campaign was conducted and not the nature and origin of the biblical arguments employed by Butler or her opponents.

Walkowitz paid attention to prostitution in a particular locality through a study of Plymouth and Southampton to test the 'myths' referred to earlier.³⁵ This thesis will explore the nature of prostitution in male celibate Oxford, where Butler was resident, as the seedbed of Butler's outcast theology. The intention here is not to question or endorse the 'myths', or to provide a 'general social profile' of the prostitutes, as Walkowitz did in her study.³⁶ Rather it is to consider the dynamics at work in the regulation of prostitution in the unusual setting of the university and the impact on Butler of this aspect of living there.

Furthermore Walkowitz also gave a detailed analysis of the backgrounds of the women involved in leadership of the LNA, including their religious allegiances. However, the nature of their religious motivation was not developed, nor their use of the Bible, since Walkowitz focused on class and gender issues but not on religion.³⁷

³⁴ P. McHugh, *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform* (London, 1980), p.28

³⁵ Walkowitz, in Vicinus (1980), pp.72-93

³⁶ *ibid.* p.73

³⁷ Walkowitz (1980) pp.123, 124. See also Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford, 1979). Caine's subject matter was similarly Victorian women on the public stage, 'each of whom led a major feminist campaign'. However in examining the nature of their feminism she shed little light on their religious influences.

Alison Milbank's 1987 statement that to enter Butler studies was to enter a minefield,³⁸ captures well the heated debates at that time as to whether religion should be simply equated with patriarchy and dismissed as having had no positive contribution to the quest for women's rights, or whether any Victorian who described herself as a Christian could be called 'feminist'.

In a short 1969 article looking at Victorian women preachers, Olive Anderson concluded that religion had not helped feminism and was not the area of greatest change.³⁹ More fundamentally, some historians were simply unaware of the importance of religion in women's lives as an aspect of women's history which needed exploration alongside concepts such as education or employment. As Gerda Lerner stated in 1993, the

'insight that religion was the primary arena on which women fought for hundreds of years for feminist consciousness was not one I had previously had.'⁴⁰

As a result of the work of Lerner and others there was a religious turn leading to a wider exploration of religion in gender history. The work of Julie Melnyk and others took seriously women's contributions to 19th Century theological debate and its dissemination to those outside the academy or the ranks of the clergy.⁴¹ Mark M. Freed's chapter makes the important point that whilst 'Benjamin Jowett and Matthew Arnold are perhaps the most famous English voices of German criticism' in the

³⁸ Alison Milbank, 'Josephine Butler: Christianity, Feminism and Social Action' in J. Obelkevich, L. Roper, R. Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (Abingdon, 1987) pp.154-164, p.154

³⁹ Olive Anderson, 'Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change', *Historical Journal*, 12:3 (1969) pp.467-484, p.484

⁴⁰ G. Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York, 1993), Preface

⁴¹ Julie Melnyk, (ed.), *Women's Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1998)

Victorian era, Mary Augusta Ward's novel, *Robert Elsmere*, had a very significant effect and an important role in furthering discussion about the historicity of the Bible and its value as the basis for faith and morality.⁴² Other examples are studied of 19th Century women who wrote theologically, not only in novels but also in non-fiction prose, and re-interpreted the 'faith of their fathers'. Lucretia Flammang's chapter on Butler highlighted the significance for Butler of being able to adopt a prophetic role, which she could claim legitimised her voice as part of the Christian tradition.⁴³ Flammang suggested that 'because she wrote on behalf of the rights of prostitutes, a wholly traditional theology could not support her',⁴⁴ and Melnyk described Butler's theology as 'heterodox'.⁴⁵ This raises the question of whether Butler's theology was less than orthodox and outside the bounds of the Christian tradition. Or was the suggestion that Butler's ideas were not mainstream in the sermons and writings of the church of her day? Or was her theology unorthodox simply because a woman was expressing it? This thesis will look more closely and extensively at Butler's biblical interpretation to establish the content of her theology so that its nature can be discussed. In other words could it be classified alongside Ward's ideas as a radical departure from the thought of past generations of Christian thinkers and believers, or was Butler foregrounding an aspect of orthodox Christian thought that was not contemporaneously being expressed, or was she in fact attempting to popularise ideas about the outcast that were being expressed in contemporary movements such as the Church Penitentiary Association?

⁴² Mark M. Freed, 'The Moral Irrelevance of Dogma: Mary Ward and Critical Theology in England', in Melnyk (1998) pp.131-147, p.133

⁴³ Lucretia Flammang, 'And Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy: The Voice and Vision of Josephine Butler' in Melnyk (1998), pp.151-163, p. 151, p.157

⁴⁴ *ibid* p.151

⁴⁵ Julie Melnyk, 'Introduction' in Melnyk (1998), pp.xi-xviii, p.xvi

In 1999 A. van Drenth and F. De Haan made the point that:

‘While religion has to some extent been rediscovered as a potentially empowering force in women’s lives, instead of just being a vehicle for patriarchy, its role in the 19th Century women’s movement and in feminism is still underrated.’⁴⁶

Clearly much research has been done since then, but their statement may still be true, and similarly a natural focus by a scholar on one aspect of the gender, religion, race and politics area may obscure another. Thus underplaying religion may be deliberate or accidental.

Lisa Nolland, discussing Jane Jordan’s account of the tragic death of Butler’s daughter Eva, made the important point that because Jordan appears uneasy with Butler’s religious analysis of life,

‘The givenness of her own interpretative world, so different from Butler’s, has resulted in a (no doubt unintended) filtering of the material evidence. This leaves Jordan’s readers, if not to some degree Jordan herself, disconnected from what, for Butler, was in many ways the heart of the matter.’⁴⁷

Jordan’s impressive biography of Butler covered a lot of ground, and in careful detail, but it was perhaps the same tendency towards being uneasy with Butler’s religiosity that lead Jordan to omit any mention of Butler’s work alongside the Salvation Army in Switzerland and the 304-page book she wrote on the subject. This thesis will pay careful attention to Butler’s ‘interpretive world’ and her understanding of the Bible which underpinned it. This will include exploring Butler’s relationship with the Salvation Army and why she felt it was important to write at length about their work in Switzerland. An understanding of this will demonstrate that Butler cannot be properly

⁴⁶ A. van Drenth, and F. De Haan, , *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam, 1999), p.13

⁴⁷ Lisa Nolland, ‘Josephine Butler and the Historian: Critic and Friend’, in J. Dagggers, and D. Neal, *Sex Gender and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited* (New York, 2006) pp.113-134, p.117

understood without consideration of her faith which impacted not just on her beliefs and practice with regard to the church but also on every other aspect of her life and campaign on behalf of the outcast.

Jenny Dagers and Diana Neal drew attention to the way that

““second-wave” preoccupations inform Walkowitz’s judgment that the effect of the abolitionist campaign...was to sanction coercive and repressive measures against prostitution, pornography and homo-sexuality.”⁴⁸

This, they say, led Walkowitz to emphasise

‘the limitations of the abolitionist stress on female powerlessness and victimisation, and the (custodial) motherly role taken... towards prostitutes more than the radical nature of Butler’s emphasis on sisterhood.’

By contrast, they gave Margaret Forster’s view that Butler introduced a ‘cross-class concept of womankind to feminism.’⁴⁹ This thesis will argue that in considering Butler’s language of sisterhood and her practice of addressing women as ‘sister’, ‘daughter’ or ‘mother’ it is vital to consider the way it was informed by the language of the Bible.

Important work in the field of colonial and post-colonial history on race, sex and politics has produced a large literature with new perspectives from which to consider Butler. Catherine Hall in her book, *Civilising Subjects* demonstrated that English or British identity was shaped by or over against the identity of colonised British subjects. Butler’s role as ‘a key figure in imperial sexuality politics’ is being explored both in former colonies and in Britain. As Richard Phillips puts it, the Liverpool Butler lived and worked in ‘during the formative stages’ of her campaign against the CDAs was ‘a

⁴⁸ Dagers and Neal (2006), Introduction p.4

⁴⁹ *ibid.* See M. Forster, *Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of Active Feminism 1839-1939* (London, 1984), p.170

centre of imperial commerce and trade... with an underclass of prostitutes'.⁵⁰ Hall has argued convincingly that whilst 'Class and gender werecrucial axes of power, differentiating men and women and bisecting this divide in cross-cutting and complicated ways', it must also be borne in mind that 'questions of race and ethnicity were also always present in the nineteenth century, foundational to English forms of classification and relations of power.'

The dimension of race in Butler's thinking and in her biblical interpretation will be considered. As Hall noted, the much earlier work of C. L. R. James, who was himself a member of the African diaspora, had 'challenged the assumption that causality always ran from the centre to the colony, and that metropolitan politics were unrelated to those of the periphery.'⁵¹ The role of Toussaint L'Ouverture in the Haitian revolution of the end of the 18th Century, which was the subject of James's 1938 book, will be seen to be an important part of Butler's thinking about the nobility of black people. Other aspects of influence on Butler from the colonies and former colonies in terms of hearing black voices will be considered.

Philippa Levine's work on *Gender and Empire* demonstrated 'sex as part of the politics of Empire', and explored the gender and racial dimensions of representations of sexuality in the colonies, and of the attempts to regulate sexual encounters there.⁵²

⁵⁰ Richard Phillips 'Histories of Sexuality and Imperialism: What's the Use?' *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 63 (2007) pp.136-153, p.138. <http://hwj.oxfordjournals.org> (accessed 6th August 2014)

⁵¹ Hall, C., *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2002), p.8. See C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London, 1938)

⁵² Philippa Levine, 'Sexuality, Gender and Empire in P. Levine (ed.) *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004), ch.6 p.134-155. See also her *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (London, 2003)

Similarly, in exploring issues in gender and empire in the Victorian world, Antoinette Burton argued that 'like Victorian domestic ideology itself, performances of women's virtue were staged neither in Britain nor in India alone but in the transnational communities of colonial culture' that empire generated.⁵³ Work on the concept of 'imperial feminism' has drawn attention to the ways campaigning for their 'sisters' in India enabled women in Britain to argue for the right to full citizenship and the vote.⁵⁴

Burton has explored the question of how British imperial culture shaped Victorian feminism and drawn attention to the influence of imperialism alongside other already acknowledged influences, such as Christianity, in moulding Butler's view of, and response to, the Cantonment Acts and the regulation of prostitution in India by the British empire. In focusing on Butler's self-understanding as the voice of the outcast and its relation to her biblical interpretation and public theology, aspects of Burton's analysis of Butler will be considered.

An important methodological question raised by Burton is the reliability of the accounts given by Butler and her associates of what the prostitutes in India said. In other words, was the voice of the outcast being heard in the later written sources, and of how much value were they in establishing what was really happening in India? Thus, this thesis will discuss what factors need to be taken into consideration as possible barriers to Butler accurately representing these women.

⁵³ Antoinette Burton, *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham NC, 2011), p.212

⁵⁴ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (N Carolina, 1994) p.171ff.

The Influence of Women's Anti-Slavery Activity

One important influence on women's biblical interpretation which has not been sufficiently taken into account is women's anti-slavery activity. Clare Midgley's important book, *Women Against Slavery*, traced the complex shifting alliances of local anti-slavery groups both in America and Britain.⁵⁵ She demonstrated the importance of the independent approach of women like Mary Estlin (1820-1902) and Elizabeth Pease Nichol (1807-97) who would not allow their women's anti-slavery societies to become mere auxiliaries of the men's societies. Midgley's work proves to be the most valuable source for piecing together the ways in which the views and actions of the network of women anti-slavery supporters shaped Butler's campaign. Midgley grasped the importance of anti-slavery for Butler in terms of underlying principles, such as her admiration for the leading American abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879).⁵⁶

Similarly, Judith Walkowitz recognised the importance of anti-slavery for Butler's development.⁵⁷ She demonstrated very convincingly the overlap between Butler supporters and women who had previously been active in anti-slavery activity.

However, the Bible and its interpretation which undergirded these beliefs and had to be used to justify the praxis of women's anti-slavery societies was not the focus of Midgley or Walkowitz, and they do not explore the continuity of Butler's understanding of the Bible with that of her anti-slavery fore-mothers. The influence of John Grey's anti-slavery reading of the Bible on his daughter Josephine has been well

⁵⁵ C. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780- 1870* (London, 1992)

⁵⁶ Midgley (1992), p.174, n.75

⁵⁷ Walkowitz (1980), pp.123, 124

acknowledged, but this thesis will ask whether *women* who influenced Butler's anti-slavery reading of the Bible can be traced.

Allen Dwight Callahan points out that 'African Americans are the children of slavery in America. And the Bible, as no other book is the book of slavery's children.'⁵⁸ Used to argue for and against slaveholding, the Bible and its interpretation was uniquely important as a focus for equal rights issues in the 19th Century, whether rights for women or rights for the enslaved. Furthermore, some of the interpretation was done by the enslaved and formerly enslaved and used by anti-slavery campaigners to persuade readers of the justice of their cause. Thus the influence of slave narratives on Butler's reading of the Bible and public theology will be considered.⁵⁹

Butler's Religion

Though Church historians were slower to see the importance and potential of gender as a field of enquiry in religious history, in 1998 Robert Swanson edited a volume in the Studies in Church History series, devoted to essays on *Gender and Christian Religion*, and Kienzle and Walker edited *Women, Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*. The importance of exploring the role of gender when considering the place of religion in Church, society and individual piety, has been

⁵⁸ Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (Yale, 2006), p.xi. In her Introduction to M. A. Taylor, & A. Choi, (eds.) *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (Michigan, 2012), p.6, Taylor discusses the fact that 'non-western and non-white voices are unrepresented' in the selection of writers. See M. J. Selvidge, *Notorious Voices: Feminist Biblical Interpretation, 1500-1920* (New York, 1996) for 19th Century African American women interpreters.

⁵⁹ For an extensive exploration of the biblical case made in support of slavery in the mid 19th Century see e.g., Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (Yale, 2005) and Eugene Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Georgia, 1998)

firmly asserted and proved a productive avenue of research.⁶⁰ New attention has been given to the importance of religion for individual women in the 19th century⁶¹ and to their emergence as preachers and leaders in the Church.⁶² Following the religious turn in gender history it has once more been recognised that fruitful enquiries can be made into the relationship between religion and the roles of women.

Pamela Walker's article in *Women, Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (1998), for example, shows how, for Catherine Booth (1829-1890), the co-founder of the Salvation Army, preaching led to her declaration,

'I felt quite at home on the platform – far more than I do in the kitchen'.⁶³

Sue Morgan and Jacquelyn De Vries write of

⁶⁰ R. N. Swanson, (ed.), *Gender and Christian Religion: Studies in Church History*, 34 (Suffolk, 1998); Beverly Mayne Kienzle & Pamela J. Walker (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (London, 1998). See also, e.g., Kimberley Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writings in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008); Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900* (Basingstoke, 2002); Anne Hogan, & Andrew Bradstock (eds.) *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House* (Basingstoke, 1998)

⁶¹ E.g. Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists, 1825-75* (Exeter, 2000); Sandra Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780-1930* (Abingdon, 2007); Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker women in America* (New York, 1997); A. M. Eason, *Women in God's Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army* (Ontario, 2003)

⁶² E.g. D. M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton, 1992); Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Turn the Pulpit Loose: Two Centuries of American Women Evangelists* (New York, 2004); Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London, 1994); John Read, *Catherine Booth Laying the Theological Foundations of a Radical Movement* (Oregon, 2013)

⁶³ Pamela Walker, 'A Chaste and Fervid Eloquence: Catherine Booth and the Ministry of Women in the Salvation Army', Beverly Mayne Kienzle, & Pamela J. Walker, (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity* (London, 1998) pp.288-302, p.294

‘the sheer diversity and richness of the recent “religious turn” in history and the significance of gender as a methodological tool in eliciting new ways of reading the spiritual and the secular.’⁶⁴

Questions posed by Morgan and De Vries will be explored in relation to Butler:

‘How did Britain’s heterogeneous religious cultures shape women’s beliefs and practices? In what ways did women create and develop their own diverse religious cultures? To what extent were women’s faith and beliefs shaped by their gender, class, national identity, sexuality and denominational affiliation? And what were women’s contributions to the making of modern British cultures of belief?’⁶⁵

Historians interested in Butler’s religion have focused on themes in her thought and on her denominational affiliation. In 2001 Helen Mathers’ major article ‘The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist’ made the point that Butler’s religion had been ‘underplayed’ in some previous works, and suggested the ‘failure to “place” Butler fully within a religious tradition’, noting that there was no consensus about Butler’s religion.⁶⁶ Butler’s relative, A. R. C. Bolton, was right to note the difference in approach between A. S. G. Butler and E. Moberly Bell ‘when dealing with the complicated question of Josephine Butler’s religious beliefs’. Bell only mentions Butler’s mysticism,⁶⁷ while, on the other hand, A. S. G. Butler’s selection of material about his grandmother’s faith, and his analysis of it, provides an interesting counterpoint to later scholarship which has focused on assigning a denominational label

⁶⁴ Sue Morgan, & Jacqueline De Vries (eds.) *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Modern Britain, 1800-1940* (London, 2010), Afterword, p.231

⁶⁵ *ibid* p.3

⁶⁶ Helen Mathers, ‘The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler 1828-1906’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2 (April 2001), pp 282-312, pp.283, 285. See Chapter Four below.

⁶⁷ A. R. C. Bolton, *The Six Brides of Dilston* (Bognor Regis, 1984) p.92. See E. Moberly Bell, *Josephine Butler: Flame of Fire* (London, 1962)

to Butler.⁶⁸ Mathers gave a thorough analysis of the grounds for describing Butler as an Evangelical, and yet was carefully nuanced about this, as her thirty page article attests.

Timothy Larsen, similarly, recently claimed that Butler is best described as an Evangelical Anglican, despite her trenchant words that ‘I am not nor ever have been of the Church of England’.⁶⁹ Larsen dismissed Butler’s statement by pointing to her Anglican rites of passage- her baptism, marriage to an Anglican clergyman, and funeral and stated that there is no evidence of her worshipping regularly elsewhere. This thesis will explore whether Evangelical Anglican is the best description of Butler, and whether ascribing an accurate denominational label is the most important aspect of her churchmanship. The importance of re-examining Butler’s church allegiance is seen to be twofold: firstly, so that she is not too easily aligned with others, against the grain of her own clear statements about where she stood; and secondly, so that the danger of too narrow a focus on the question of whether she can be described as an Evangelical Anglican does not obscure other aspects of her location in the Christian tradition.

In nuancing her relationship to the Church, her relationship with her Anglican clergyman husband will be considered in order to discover what constraints his ordained status placed on Josephine. Midori Yamaguchi’s article is important here in showing the conflict between the model of a clergy wife or daughter espoused by Church of England clergy and the self-understanding of young Halleluia lasses.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ See e.g. A. S. G. Butler (1954), pp.150, 164, 169

⁶⁹ Timothy Larsen, *A People of One Book* (Oxford, 2011). See Ch 9: ‘Evangelical Anglicans: Josephine Butler and the Word of God’, pp.219-225

⁷⁰ Midori Yamaguchi, ‘The Religious Rebellion of a Clergyman’s Daughter’, *Women's History Review*, 16:5 (2007) pp. 641-660

Jocelyn Murray drew attention to the opposition that existed at the turn of the 20th Century within the Church of England to women in leadership roles, but argued that

‘although many male evangelicals still questioned the propriety of female participation in any kind of leadership role, let alone actual male ministry, the women themselves had begun to find their own way.’⁷¹

Recently, Larsen has perceptively commented that ‘Butler’s catalogue of the virtues of the mother of the Salvation Army reads like a self-portrait.’⁷² However, despite the fact that Butler wrote a history of the Salvation Army in Switzerland, and her own part in it, the significance of the relationship between Butler and the SA, particularly the women of the SA, remains unexplored. Catherine and William Booth’s oldest daughter – also Catherine but known as Katie, or later La Maréchale (the Field Marshal) – is a fascinating subject to study as an example of a pioneering woman in the Christian world, and it is, thus, both surprising and unfortunate that she was not included in Mark Eason’s recent study of women in the SA.⁷³ The explanation, perhaps, lies in the fact that Eason was addressing the Army in Britain and Katie was abroad from her early adulthood. For the student of religious history, and in particular women’s religious history, an exploration of Butler’s close relationship and collaboration with Katie is of great importance.⁷⁴

Pamela Walker’s point is still valid:

⁷¹ Jocelyn Murray, ‘Gender Attitudes and the Contribution of Women to Evangelism and Ministry in the Nineteenth Century’ in John Woolffe (ed.) *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (London 1995) pp.97-116, p.112

⁷² Larsen (2011) p.233

⁷³ Andrew Mark Eason, *Women in God’s Army : Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army* (Ontario, 2003)

⁷⁴ Catherine Booth Clibborn will be called Katie henceforth to differentiate her from Catherine Mumford Booth.

‘The Salvation Army has received scant attention from scholars. Its place in Victorian working-class communities, its relationship to the women’s movement, its innovative use of popular and commercial culture, and its integration of Methodism, revivalism and holiness have not been explored.’⁷⁵

Butler’s contemporary, W. T. Stead, gave facts and figures about which denominations supported her.⁷⁶ More recently, Rod Garner, as Alison Milbank puts it, has suggested that Butler failed to draw sufficiently on ‘the community of faith and the resources of tradition’.⁷⁷ Lisa Severin Nolland’s verdict was that Butler by-passed her natural support base of Evangelicals.⁷⁸ All of this will be questioned through an exploration of Butler’s own accounts of who supported her and where she turned for help and support, both spiritual and practical. Neglected primary sources such as Butler’s *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (1883) will be used to explore both her denominational allegiance and her ecclesiology. Importantly the question of whether the two amount to the same thing will be borne in mind. Might not Butler have had a theology of the Church based on her understanding of the Bible but have had practical allegiances and practices of church attendance which did not necessarily fit her ideal picture? In Butler’s opinion the not widely known pastor Jean Frédéric Oberlin (1740-1826) also merited a book, and her treatment of his faith and churchmanship will receive attention for light it may shed on the author’s ecclesiology.

⁷⁵ Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (London, 2001), p.3

⁷⁶ W. T. Stead, *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch* (London, 1887)p.58 and 59

⁷⁷ Milbank (2007) pp.1-11, p.8. See Rod Garner, ‘Truth before Everything’ in Milbank (2007) pp.34-50

⁷⁸ Lisa Severin Nolland, *A Victorian Feminist Christian: Josephine Butler, the Prostitutes and God* (Exeter, 2004), p.285

Butler and the Bible

As Mathers said, it is now possible for scholars to explore Butler through the dual lenses of religion and feminism, and the importance of her Christian faith has been established as a prime factor in any critical evaluation of Butler's motivation.⁷⁹ Clearly a key aspect of this is the place of the Bible in her thought. Lerner's research demonstrated, the significance of women's self-perceived 'relationship to the Divine' as foundational to their revisioning, not only of patriarchy, but also of biblical criticism, since she went on to say that women's pursuit of feminist consciousness 'found expression in more than 1000 years of feminist Bible criticism and religious revisioning.'⁸⁰ The Bible and biblical interpretation played an important role in the debate over women's status, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), the prime mover behind *The Woman's Bible* acknowledged:

'When, in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, women began to protest against their civil and political degradation, they were referred to the Bible for an answer. When they protested against their unequal position in the church, they were referred to the Bible for an answer.'⁸¹

Timothy Larsen's recent work, *A People of One Book*, demonstrated the importance of the Bible for Victorians, and pinpointed how much it was interwoven through people's private lives and public discourse. His chapter on Butler showed in a detailed fashion that this was clearly true of her, and he was, therefore, right to express surprise that the volume edited by Jenny Dagers and Diana Neal contained no chapter on Butler's

⁷⁹ Helen Mathers, 'Evangelicalism and Feminism. Josephine Butler 1828-1906' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp.123-138, p.124

⁸⁰ Lerner (1993), p.vii

⁸¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York, 1895) p.8

relationship with the Bible, even though it ‘focused on Butler’s religious identity and thought’.⁸²

The claim of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the suffrage leader, that Josephine Butler was the most distinguished woman of the 19th Century is significant, and Fawcett was eminently well placed to judge.⁸³ In contrast, the statement of another of Butler’s contemporaries the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes (1847-1902), is little known and unremarked. Reviewing Butler’s book of biblical exposition, *The Lady of Shunem* (1894), Hughes wrote that

‘this brief but profound exposition demonstrates that the Bible will never be properly understood until women as well as men expound it’.⁸⁴

This is undoubtedly a high accolade, and it came from one no less qualified to pronounce on Butler’s biblical interpretation than Fawcett was to pronounce on Butler’s contribution to the cause of women’s rights. Hughes, the Wesleyan leader of the Forward Movement, and regarded as a second Wesley, clearly valued the Bible and spent much time reading it, studying what others said of it, and expounding and applying it himself. He also worked closely with Butler in three of her campaigns – to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, to expose child prostitution in ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ scandal, and to refute the assertion of the government that no state regulated prostitution had been established in India for the British army.⁸⁵

⁸² Timothy Larsen, *A People of One Book* (Oxford, 2011), p.241. See J. Daggars and D. Neal, *Sex, Gender and Religion – Josephine Butler Revisited* (New York, 2006).

⁸³ M. G. Fawcett, & E. M. Turner, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and Their Meaning for the 20th Century* (London, 1927- reprinted 2002), p.1.

⁸⁴ Hugh Price Hughes, ‘The Lady of Shunem’ in *The Methodist Times. A Journal of Religious and Social Movement*, Vol.X. No.519 London, December 6, 1894 p.825

⁸⁵ Hughes’ collaboration with Butler is discussed below in Chapter Four.

The impact that Butler had on Hughes, at the beginning of his ministerial career, is stated by Christopher Oldstone-Moore in his biography of Hughes.⁸⁶ This thesis will explore the nature of that influence in terms of understanding of the Bible and its application, asking whether the influence continued over the years and impacted other Wesleyans including women, and what other responses contemporaries had to her biblical interpretation and public theology.

The fact that scholarly attention has now turned to Butler's use of the Bible, owes a great deal to the recent quest, spearheaded by Marion Ann Taylor in the field of the history of biblical interpretation, to recover the voices of women Bible interpreters. The work of Taylor and those associated with her has drawn attention to the many women who did interpret the Bible despite being banned from the pulpit and the academy, and the glowing reviews of the recent *Handbook of Women Bible Interpreters* show the enthusiasm with which this new initiative has been greeted.⁸⁷ Taylor's statement regarding her search for the work of women Bible interpreters is significant:

‘I began with the nineteenth century, which had been the focus of my doctoral dissertation and which is pivotal both for critical developments in biblical studies and for the history of women.’⁸⁸

It sums up the importance of the Victorian era for both women's history and biblical interpretation, implicit in which can be seen the question of whether, and how, the two

⁸⁶ C. Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity* (Cardiff, 1999)

⁸⁷ See the endorsements by scholars who have read the book in M. A. Taylor, & A. Choi, (eds.) *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (Michigan, 2012)

⁸⁸ Marion Ann Taylor, “Forgotten Nineteenth-century Women's Sermons”, *TST Homiletics Seminar* 1:1 (Winter, 2007) online <http://individual.utoronto.ca/jacobsen1/TSTHS1-1.pdf> (accessed 20/10/13)

are related to each other. Taylor and Weir describe the importance of recovering the voices of women Bible interpreters in this way:

‘these works invite us to reconsider ...the influence...women... had on other women and men through their roles as educators and scriptural interpreters,...offer remarkable examples of gendered exegesis as women read the Bible through the distinctive lens of their culture and gender identity ...suggest that the scope of definition of what is generally considered to be the genre of biblical interpretation be expanded to include the writings of those who stood outside the academy.’⁸⁹

This thesis explores how Taylor and Weir’s statement of the value of women’s biblical interpretation applies to Butler.

In the context of comparing the genre and content of North American and British women’s writings on the Bible, Taylor and Weir make an important point which needs careful attention:

‘In the United States, the civil war, the slavery issue, and the expansion of the west were the focus of many women’s and men’s energies during the nineteenth century; energy which might have been given to biblical scholarship and writing was spent elsewhere.’⁹⁰

However, there is a danger in characterising the ‘slavery issue’ as a distraction from women spending time on biblical interpretation. Biblical interpretation is always in a context and elsewhere Taylor draws attention to the importance of context:

‘does the writing say anything about the "place" (social, textual, economic, sexual, etc.) of the author and how that context affected her writing?’ ‘To what extent does the author re-write, re-fashion or re-interpret Scripture and/or traditional readings of Scripture in light of her context?’⁹¹

⁸⁹ M. Taylor & H. E. Weir, *Let her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis* (Waco, 2006), p.1f. See too N. Calvert-Koyzis & H. Weir (eds.), *Strangely Familiar: Protofeminist Interpretations of Patriarchal Biblical Texts* (Atlanta, 2009)

⁹⁰ M. A. Taylor and H. E. Weir, *Let her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis* (Waco, 2006) Introduction, pp.1-19, p.9

⁹¹ M. A. Taylor, “Forgotten Nineteenth-century Women’s Sermons”, *TST Homiletics Seminar* 1:1 (Winter, 2007) online at: <http://individual.utoronto.ca/jacobsen1/TSTHS1-1.pdf> (accessed 20/10/13)

The thesis will explore the significance of anti-slavery thought as part of the context of Butler's biblical interpretation and its influence on how she re-wrote, re-fashioned or re-interpreted Scripture and/or traditional readings of Scripture.

Ann Loades shows great sensitivity to 'Josephine's lifelong struggle with biblical texts', and draws attention to how her mother, Hannah Grey, with her Methodist and Moravian upbringing, would have influenced the way Butler read the Bible. It is an important point that

'the habit of Bible-reading and making sense of that reading in the manner characteristic of Moravians and Methodists alike translated readily into domestic life',⁹²

leading to an expectation that Butler should interpret the Bible as she read. She also makes the important observation that 'Josephine's commitment to women's suffrage did not drive her out of the Christian tradition', unlike some of her contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Therefore, as Loades says, Butler proves an interesting study since she was both deeply committed to extending women's rights and firmly convinced that the Bible, rightly expounded, was the basis of those rights.⁹³

Gerda Lerner concluded that women kept interpreting the Bible and coming to the same conclusions as other women but were unaware of this fact, since the voices of women were not transmitted in any tradition of scholarship or literature – in other words, that women's biblical interpretation did not influence other women in different locations and

⁹² Ann Loades, *Feminist Theology: Voices from the Past* (Oxford, 2001), p.77

⁹³ Loades (2001) p.75

times.⁹⁴ This research will explore whether that was true in Butler's case and ask if there is evidence of the influence of other women on Butler's biblical interpretation.

Nancy Calvert-Koyzis and Heather Weir, following Kimberley Anne Coles, raise the interesting question of whether recovering women's writings which have been regarded as marginal to the history of biblical interpretation may in fact 'involve a rather drastic reassessment of the terrain of the history of biblical interpretation.'⁹⁵ This question is particularly pertinent with regard to Butler, since her biblical interpretation and its implementation influenced Parliament and certainly, as it issued in the case of the Maiden Tribute Scandal, caused national debate⁹⁶. Thus, her biblical interpretation and resulting praxis influenced the mainstream, rather than being simply marginal. In other respects, too, Butler is of particular interest as a subject for research on women bible interpreters because of the unique sphere in which her interpretation was moulded and delivered. De Groot and Taylor maintain that

'Out of acceptable female roles such as mother and teacher of children, Sarah Trimmer wrote a commentary entitled *A Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scripture* (1805).'⁹⁷

Butler was consciously addressing those who were far from regarding themselves as unlearned – least of all in the study of Scripture.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in her unacceptable role

⁹⁴ See her essay, 'One Thousand Years of Feminist Biblical Criticism' in Lerner (1993), pp.138-166, and the discussion of it in Christiana de Groot, & Marion Ann Taylor, 'Recovering Women's Voices in the History of Biblical Interpretation', in de Groot and Taylor, *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible* (Atlanta, 2007), pp.1-17, p.1f.

⁹⁵ N. Calvert-Koyzis, & H. Weir (eds.), *Strangely Familiar: Protofeminist Interpretations of Patriarchal Biblical Texts* (Atlanta, 2009), p.5f. See Kimberley Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writings in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), p.1.

⁹⁶ See Jordan (2001) p.226

⁹⁷ De Groot, & Taylor, (2007), pp.1-17, p.10. For more on Trimmer see Heather E. Weir's chapter, 'Helping the Unlearned: Sarah Trimmer's Commentary on the Bible' in De Groot & Taylor (2007) pp.19-30

as the voice of the outcast she challenged them with her own original interpretations and uncomfortable applications. Butler appears to stand out among the selection of women interpreters in Taylor and Weir's book precisely because of the public dimensions of her interpretation: she was not speaking to a domestic audience and certainly not to children and young people. The woman's sphere in which she operated included prominent involvement in the organisation and leadership of all the major feminist causes of the 19th Century, including her leadership of the LNA in the campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts,⁹⁹ and across Europe. Notably, she was addressing those in the academy indirectly, through her writings and speeches, and directly, through her addresses to students at Cambridge and personal conversations and correspondence with academics such as Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893).¹⁰⁰

Opinions on the value of *The Lady of Shunem* (1894), Butler's full length book of biblical studies, vary widely from unimportant¹⁰¹ or 'trite'¹⁰² to 'brilliant' and 'unusual'.¹⁰³ Appreciation of the merits or demerits of her this work rests on being able to contextualise her thought, both in terms of general history and the history of biblical interpretation. Calvert-Koyzis and Weir state that the biblical interpretations of the women in their volume were studied 'in their historical context'.¹⁰⁴ With regard to Butler there is clearly a large historical context to be covered, and a more extensive exploration of this, including the historical context of individual pieces of interpretation,

⁹⁸ See A. S. G. Butler (1954) p.64 for a reference to the Pope publishing a pamphlet at Josephine's request!

⁹⁹ Henceforward referred to as the CD Acts

¹⁰⁰ See Jordan & Sharp, 'Introduction', vol. 3, pp.1-14, p.10

¹⁰¹ (1962), p.208

¹⁰² Mathers (2001) pp 282-312, p.310

¹⁰³ Amanda Benckhuysen, 'Reading between the Lines: Josephine Butler's Socially Conscious Commentary on Hagar' in de Groot & Taylor (2007), pp.135-148, p.136

¹⁰⁴ Calvert-Koyzis and Weir (2009), Back cover

is needed. Those dismissive of Butler's ideas in *The Lady of Shunem* may not have a detailed appreciation of interpretive techniques as applied to the Bible. Clearly opinions on this book will vary, but together a detailed historical perspective on her work and a secure knowledge of theology and biblical interpretation will enable a more rounded and nuanced picture of her biblical interpretation and public theology to emerge, and provide fresh grounds for discussion and evaluation of her legacy.

Reception history of the Bible also influences this thesis, since recent study has drawn attention to how the use, influence and impact of the Bible has been expressed in art, literature, music and the wider culture – not only in works of theology. Furthermore, reception history has drawn attention to 'the importance of context in any act of interpretation'.¹⁰⁵ It influences this thesis in two ways. Firstly, through commentaries which employ a reception history approach, where interpretations from successive periods of history are included rather than only the latest debates about a given text. Thus, David Gunn's commentary on the book of Judges has been valuable in contextualising the attitudes of the generations prior to, and contemporary with, Butler.¹⁰⁶

Reception history has also influenced the thinking behind this thesis in the sense of tracing the afterlives of biblical women as expressed in art, literature and popular thinking. Thus the two volume collection of articles on biblical women, *From the Margins*, has been valuable in evaluating understandings both of characters included in the books, such as Mary Magdalene and Rahab, and, by extension, of characters not included, such as Hagar. This has given a context for evaluating Butler's distinctive

¹⁰⁵ C. Joynes & C. Rowland (eds.) *From the Margins 2: Women of the New Testament and Their Afterlives* (Sheffield, 2009), p.3

¹⁰⁶ David Gunn, *Judges: Blackwell Bible Commentaries*, (Oxford, 2005)

contribution to the afterlives of characters such as the Levite's Concubine, Hagar and 'the woman of the city who was a sinner'.

Additionally, many unpublished papers from recent conferences in this area have stimulated thought and given insights into how 'unauthorised' interpretations can influence, and have an impact, in ways that books of biblical commentary might not.¹⁰⁷ So, the fact that biblical interpretation is always in a context and is influenced, not just by what the interpreter has read in the way of serious theological study, but also by the art, poetry and popular culture which impinges on the subject under interpretation, has been borne in mind when seeking the influences on Butler's biblical interpretation. Novels she read and paintings she may have seen will be mentioned where relevant.

Through her marriage to George, who introduced the study of Geography and Art in Oxford University, she knew John Ruskin, visited Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his studio, and was sculpted by Alexander Munro as 'The Blessed Damozel' of Rossetti's 1850 poem.¹⁰⁸ She had her portrait painted by George Richmond, who painted Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte around the same time.¹⁰⁹ Through an analysis of one of Munro's busts of Butler and the obituaries that were published at her death, Philippa Toogood has considered the role of art in giving a different slant on Butler. This thesis

¹⁰⁷ For example, sessions of the 'Recovering Women Bible Interpreters', and the 'Use and Influence of the Bible' strands at the Annual meetings of the Society for Biblical Literature.

¹⁰⁸ See *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892) pp.14, 91, and pp.263f & 464, for George's association with other prominent writers; Philippa Toogood, 'Josephine Butler (1828 – 1906) as depicted by Alexander Munro in sculpture (1855) and obituary (1907)', University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education (March, 2013) Online: <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/resources/documents/josephine-butler-1828-%E2%80%93-1906-depicted-alexander-munro-sculpture-1855>

¹⁰⁹ Jordan (2001) p.29

will consider whether, and how, Butler's biblical interpretation was influenced by her interest in and knowledge of Art.

The importance of her theology as expressed in her biblical interpretation also needs careful attention. Some authors state that Butler was not a theologian. They include Benckhuysen who is looking specifically at Butler's biblical interpretation.¹¹⁰ She appears to base this assessment on Butler's lack of formal theological training. Pat Starkey appears to attribute Butler's religious toleration to the fact that she 'knew little theology'.¹¹¹

In contrast to this, Mathers and Dagers rightly refer to Butler as a theologian. Jenny Dagers points out that in 19th Century Britain, 'Women were... effectively banned from pulpit as well as university, in accordance with the assumption that theology was a male preserve'. However, she goes on to say that this did not deter Butler 'from engaging in theological debate, or from introducing theological terms of argument into wider political polemic'.¹¹² In half a page of her article Butler is given as an example of a woman theologian. Dagers states that her aim is to 'draw out theological themes already present in these writings, which are precursors of developments in the more inclusive theologies emerging from the later decades of the twentieth century.'

Though Butler said she was not a theologian – presumably referring to the fact that she had had no formal training in an educational institution – nevertheless she expressed her biblical interpretation on the public stage in words and actions which formed her public

¹¹⁰ Benckhuysen (2007), pp. 135-148

¹¹¹ Pat Starkey, 'Saints, Virgins and Family Members: Exemplary Bibliographies? Josephine Butler as Biographer', in Dagers and Neal (2006) pp.135-153, p.145

¹¹² Dagers, J., 'Women and Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain within the Authorised Discourse', *Open Theology*, 1 (2007) <http://www.opentheology.org/> (accessed 01/09/2009)

theology. Nancy Boyd's distinction in presenting Butler and the other two women she discusses not 'as theologians but as social activists... directed by their theology', is therefore a narrow view of theology.¹¹³ Butler articulated her biblical interpretation on the public stage as a public theology on behalf of the outcast. Public theology, according to Andrew Bradstock,

'is a theology which seeks to bring scripture to bear on issues in the real world; it can be undertaken by 'ordinary' believers as much as by 'professional' theologians and clergy; it creates opportunities for 'speaking truth to power'; and it seeks to make a difference to people and situations. In tune with Christ's approach, public theology is about demonstrating that authentic faith concerns action and not just words, changing the world rather than redefining or reinterpreting it.'¹¹⁴

A significant contribution to addressing the theology of a 19th Century woman is John Read's book on Catherine Booth. Read states that his aim is

'to redress the deficit in understanding Catherine's evangelical convictions, understood as the underlying conceptual structure of her Salvationism.'¹¹⁵

John Read is the first scholar to look at Catherine Booth's theology and take seriously her theological contribution to the SA. Against Roger Green, Read asserts that

'this study has revealed that Catherine did in fact have a nuanced understanding of her Wesleyan heritage and that her addresses reveal a strong grasp of "detailed and precise theological issues"'.¹¹⁶

Read's study is exciting because in discussing Booth's theology, for example in relation to an Augustinian view of the Trinity, and not just her praxis or use of the Bible, he

¹¹³ Nancy Boyd, *Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill, Florence Nightingale: Three Women Who Changed Their World* (London, 1982) p. xv

¹¹⁴ Andrew Bradstock, "'Seeking the welfare of the city": Public Theology as Radical Action' in Zoe Bennett & David B. Gowler (eds.) *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland* (Oxford, 2012), pp.225-240, .p.225

¹¹⁵ John Read, *Catherine Booth Laying the Theological Foundations of a Radical Movement* (Oregon, 2013) p.4

¹¹⁶ Read (2013) p.209 citing Roger J. Green, *Catherine Booth: A Biography of the Co-Founder of the Salvation Army* (Crowborough, 1997), p.101-2

gives due recognition to the fact that women, as well as men, thought and argued theologically in the 19th century, whether or not they had had what was regarded as a theological education. As in Read's work, a close reading of Butler's biblical interpretation and its theological implications will be employed. In contrast to Read, this thesis will seek where possible to pay attention to the particular circumstances in which Butler was putting pen to paper in the production of individual works.

In exploring the question of what sort of theology Butler had, Rebecca Styler, focused on tracing Butler's liberationist views to political roots such as Chartism, and she drew a parallel with 20th Century liberation theology.¹¹⁷ Alison Milbank has paid careful attention to the echoes of Scripture in Butler's writing and explored these political roots¹¹⁸ and the millenarian¹¹⁹ influence from Butler's experience of the Irvingite tradition in her childhood. Rod Garner, who is Theological Consultant to the diocese of Liverpool, explored the basis of Butler's sense of prophetic authority claiming that Newman's Oxford sermons on faith and reason 'reflect her stance and disposition towards these matters'.¹²⁰ Garner also suggested that, because of her apparent lack of interest in doctrinal controversies, Butler

'grasped, intuitively perhaps, that at the beginning of it all there was at the heart of the Christian religion not an idea, not a philosophy but a moral praxis made singular in time and space in Jesus.'¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Rebecca Styler, *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, (Farnham, 2010), pp.128-132

¹¹⁸ Alison Milbank, 'Josephine Butler: Christianity, Feminism and Social Action' in J. Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, Raphael Samul (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (Abingdon, 1987) pp.154-164, p.155, 161

¹¹⁹ Alison Milbank, 'Josephine Butler's Apocalyptic Vision of the Prostitute and Modern Debates on Prostitution' in Alison Milbank (ed.), *Beating the Traffic: Josephine Butler and Anglican Social Action Today* (Winchester, 2007) pp.89-104, p.93

¹²⁰ R. Garner, 'Truth before Everything' in Milbank (2007), pp. 34-50, p.38

¹²¹ *ibid* p.44

However, the case is not made for why an apparent lack of interest in doctrinal controversies would preclude Butler from having a carefully worked out theology of praxis. This thesis will explore her grasp of doctrine to discover if it was more than ‘intuitive’.

Methodology

As well as the methodological strategies already mentioned in the previous discussion of other scholars’ work, this research has employed a careful reading of Butler’s work to find her biblical exegesis, and when found, to analyse it and compare it and contextualise it with other interpretations. Secondly, it has researched Butler’s life in order to find the influences upon her, and when found, to consider, and research further, how those influences might have particularly impacted upon her biblical interpretation.

A prolific writer, Butler published over 90 works, wrote for journals, gave interviews, and generated a voluminous correspondence. Her stenographer in Winchester for 10 years said she could produce 10,000 words of correspondence a day.¹²² This thesis has focused on published works of pamphlet and book length and journals closely associated with Butler, looking for pieces of biblical interpretation and theological content. The journals were *The Dawn* (1888-1896) and *The Stormbell* (1898-1900), both of which Butler edited and much of which she wrote, and *The Shield* (established 1868) published by the LNA which reported some of her speeches. Primary sources written by George both unpublished and published have been studied and Josephine’s unpublished diaries. In addition, correspondence between Josephine and George and their family and associates has been studied.

¹²² *The Shield*, ‘Newspaper Biographies of Mrs. Butler & Press Notices of Her Death’, New Series Vol.X:92 (Jan 1907), pp.2-16

The influences upon Butler which are being explored by scholars are becoming more diverse and an increasingly nuanced assessment is emerging with ‘a variety of interpretations... of Butler’s place in Victorian feminism’,¹²³ as well as a diversity of opinions about her religious location.¹²⁴ As Dagers and Neal say, this is leading to a ‘deepening appreciation of the complexity of her contribution to the “crusade” of her own time.’¹²⁵

As a further contribution to this, Part One of this thesis explores the influences upon, and development of, Butler’s biblical interpretation and praxis, and discusses her location within the Christian tradition. Part Two turns to specific examples of her biblical interpretation with a view to demonstrating how knowledge of the influences upon her can contribute to a more careful reading of her exposition and application of Scripture in regard to the outcast.

¹²³ Dagers & Neal (2006), ‘Introduction’ pp.1-19, p.5

¹²⁴ On her mysticism see Scott, David, ‘Josephine Butler and St. Catherine of Siena’, in Milbank (2007), pp.51-68; Hester Jones, ‘Josephine Butler “The Still Voice of Silence”’: Prophets and Prostitutes’ in Milbank (2007), pp.69-88; and on her attitude to the Catholic church, D. Neal, ‘Josephine Butler: Flirting with the Catholic Other’, in Dagers & Neal (2006) pp.155-171

¹²⁵ Dagers & Neal (2006), preface

CHAPTER ONE
THE VOICE OF THE OUTCAST

Introduction

This chapter will consider what Butler meant by describing herself as the ‘representative’, the ‘voice’ of the outcast. This will be done firstly by looking at the use of the word ‘outcast’ in her contemporary society, and by analysing examples of Butler’s use of the expression ‘outcast’. The biblical use of the word will be explored and the argument will be put forward that Butler derived her usage of the word from her reading of the Bible. Next, the question of why Butler spoke for the outcast rather than getting her to speak for herself will be explored. Could she accurately claim to be representing the outcast, and did she make any effort to let the outcast’s voice be heard directly? The significance of Butler being a voice, a woman’s voice, on the public stage in the 19th Century will be contextualised and discussed. Finally, Butler’s understanding of her call to prophesy, or proclaim God’s truth, will be explored and suggested as the touchstone of her self-understanding of her life, before and after the call. Subsequent chapters will unfold in relation to Butler’s belief that, as the voice of the outcast, she was called to cry aloud as one of God’s great company of preachers.

Use of ‘Outcast’ in Victorian Society

Though the word ‘outcast’ was sometimes used of men or in a non- gender specific way, its application to women who were regarded as sexually immoral was not original to Butler. Nor was Butler the only one to be concerned about the fate of the outcast. An 1850s appeal on behalf of the London Female Preventive and Reformatory Institution hoped that

‘many whom God has entrusted with wealth, ... while they may be prevented from personally opening a door to the outcast, ... will enable the Committee to do so’.¹²⁶

Victorian art and literature also employed the term outcast – notably in Richard Redgrave’s eponymous 1851 painting. As Linda Nochlin puts it,

‘fallen in the feminine... exerted a peculiar fascination on the imagination of nineteenth-century artists... writers, social critics and uplifters, an interest that reached its peak... in the middle years of the nineteenth century.’¹²⁷

In Redgrave’s dramatic domestic scene, the father is throwing his unmarried daughter and her baby out of the house.¹²⁸ As the Art historian Jan Marsh comments, Redgrave’s painting may have been intended to inspire sympathy, nevertheless it ‘dramatizes conventional wisdom: sexual misconduct must not be pardoned.’¹²⁹ Butler’s memory of the discussion by Oxford scholars of Elizabeth Gaskell’s recently published novel, *Ruth* (1853), bears witness to the power of such conventions. Her silent response on that occasion acts as a vivid and apt example of how she felt in male Oxford society in general. ‘I suffered as only God and the faithful companion of my life could know’. Butler’s suffering was caused by sitting in her drawing room and listening to an academic say, that ‘he would not allow his own mother to read such a book’.¹³⁰ Making *Ruth*, the mother of an illegitimate child, the central character was new and

¹²⁶ Thomas Raikes, London Female Preventive and Reformatory Institution, ‘Our London Streets’, No.V. A Brief Statement of Operations, from Sept.1857, to Dec.1858, p.7 See too *The Nautical Magazine* quoted in *The Shield* No 243 Jan 1 1876 p.46

¹²⁷Linda Nochlin, ‘Lost and "Found": Once More the Fallen Woman’, *Art Bulletin*, 60 (Mar. 1978) pp.139-153, p.139.

¹²⁸ *The Outcast* by Richard Redgrave, RA. 1851. Oil on canvas, 31 x 41 inches. Royal Academy of the Arts, London.

¹²⁹ Jan Marsh, ‘Men, Virtue and Valor’ in Katharine Lochnan & Carol Jacobi (eds.), *Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Vision* (Ontario, 2009) pp 97-110, p.102

¹³⁰ *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892), p.96

bold, and the novel had become a focus of the debate about the double standard.¹³¹

Despite the fact that she repents of her wrongdoing and becomes a saintly figure prepared to sacrifice her own life for others, when Ruth's secret is discovered she faces being driven forth to a life of prostitution.

Butler approved of the novel, which concurred with her beliefs that the outcast woman was not solely responsible for her transgression and that the outcast was redeemable.¹³²

Gaskell consciously refers to biblical ideas in her novel, including the Parable of the Prodigal Son. When Ruth is convicted of sin and sinks to the floor by her pew, Gaskell cites the Prodigal's words - 'I will go to my father and say father I have sinned against heaven and against you' (Luke 15:18). When Ruth is buried after a self-sacrificial death, Gaskell includes in her description of those gathered 'one or two outcasts'.¹³³

How controversial *Ruth* was is seen by the fact that it was withdrawn from libraries, and by Elizabeth Gaskell's statements that she did not read it with her own daughters and that it was an 'unfit subject for fiction'.¹³⁴ Furthermore, though her husband, William Gaskell, who was a Unitarian minister in Cross St. Chapel in Manchester, supported her work, copies of the book were burned, including by members of her husband's congregation. W. R. Greg, who was a friend and member of that congregation, did not burn his copy. Coinciding with the publication of chs.41-43 of *David Copperfield*, where Charles Dickens referred to 'little Emily' when 'she had become an outcast' after

¹³¹ See Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London, 1993), pp.337-341 for a discussion of the reaction to *Ruth*

¹³² *Recollections* (1892), p.96

¹³³ E. Gaskell, *Ruth* (London 1853, in Penguin Classics edition London, 1997) pp.129 & p.373.

¹³⁴ Uglow (1993), p.338.

her elopement, Greg had published an article on prostitution which he called ‘the great social vice of the age’. In it he protested against prostitutes being treated as

‘outcasts, pariahs, lepers. Their touch, even in the extremity of suffering, is shaken off as if it were pollution and disease. It is discreditable to a woman even to be supposed to know of their existence.’¹³⁵

Greg’s powerful article points out the financial imperative for prostitution:

‘Insufficiently fed, insufficiently clad she is driven out... for the chance of earning a meal’. He highlights the double standard: ‘society...welcomes back with joy and generous forgetfulness the lost sheep and the prodigal son,’ and argues that society is unchristian. A poignant piece of evidence he includes, which would surely have had an impact on Butler, is Henry Mayhew’s interview with twenty five needle women, where he reports that all were weeping, including himself. Greg urged ‘administrative supervision’ to improve the ‘tone’¹³⁶ of prostitution, but Butler differed decisively from him in wanting to see an end to it.

Butler’s Use of the Term ‘Outcast’

In her 1898 article ‘Dead Hands upon the Threshold’ Josephine Butler wrote:

‘God has done me the great favour of allowing me, in a manner, to be for these thirty years, the representative of the outcast – of “the woman of the city who was a sinner”. It is *her* voice which I utter’.¹³⁷

Butler thus equates the outcast with ‘the woman of the city who was a sinner’ of

Luke7:37, who approaches Jesus whilst he is a guest of Simon the Pharisee.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ W. R. Greg, ‘Prostitution’ in *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* 53:2 (July 1850), pp.448-506, p.455

¹³⁶ Greg (1850), pp.448-506, pp.455, 471, 494.

¹³⁷ ‘A Typical Tragedy. Dead Hands Upon The Threshold’, *The Storm-Bell*, 10 (December 1898), pp.111-115, p.115.

¹³⁸ It is an important point that throughout the history of the Church – including in Butler’s day – readers tended to conflate the narrative of the “woman of the city who

Commenting on Butler's exposition of the narrative of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19, Marion Ann Taylor, the historian of biblical interpretation, observes that,

'Butler read Scripture carefully, attentive to the plight of the outcast. Indeed, she read the story from the victim's perspective, actually becoming the voice of the outcast'.¹³⁹

Although Butler's article was written towards the end of her life, she had been using the word 'outcast' throughout her public campaigns, therefore her usage pre-dated *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883), which was a widely read investigation into the plight of the urban poor;¹⁴⁰ and although the occasional reference has been found where she is applying the word to men as well as women¹⁴¹ – as is the case in Mearns' pamphlet – usually she used it only for the women she was concerned about.

When reading Butler's work, whether in speeches, or letters, or published sources, the prevalence of the use of the word 'outcast' is striking. In terms of her self-understanding of her calling and work, Butler significantly states that

was a sinner" with the story of Mary Magdalene 'out of whom were cast seven demons' according to Mark 16:9, and thus characterised Mary Magdalene as a prostitute. This led to the common usage of 'Magdalenes' to refer to prostitutes or penitent prostitutes. Additionally the story of Mary of Bethany anointing Jesus in Matthew 26:6 was sometimes conflated with these two narratives with the result that Mary Magdalene was identified with Mary of Bethany. So the expression, the Magdalene, or 'the woman of the city who was a sinner', could be referring to any or all of these biblical characters. Whether Butler similarly conflated these separate characters is not clear. For a discussion of 'the confusion of Marys', and what she symbolized, see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York, 1983), pp.230-232

¹³⁹ Marion Ann Taylor, "'Cold Dead Hands Upon our Threshold": Josephine Butler's Reading of the Story of the Levite's Concubine, Judges 19-21' in Heskett, Randall and Brian P. Irwin (eds.), *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God Through Historically Dissimilar Traditions* (London, 2010), pp.259-273, p.271

¹⁴⁰ A. Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* (London, 1883)

¹⁴¹ See e.g. *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (London, 1883) p.10

‘We have been ordained, so to speak, to contend for ‘great principles’ in the case of... the outcast woman.’

She amplifies this by stating that outcast women are individuals who are

‘the least interesting of all human beings to society,... the most despised, the weakest, and, as men of the world express it, the most worthless of human creatures.’¹⁴²

Butler’s attitude to the outcasts was in stark contrast to this. During an incapacitating bout of illness, she wrote to her friend and colleague, Charlotte Wilson, asking for her prayers and saying, ‘I long to be restored for the sake of my beloved outcasts whom few love as I love them.’¹⁴³

Butler’s emphatic instruction ‘never use the word prostitute if you can help it’¹⁴⁴ – to her close colleague Fanny Forsaith, who acted as secretary to Butler and the campaign, and thus often wrote material to be sent out to supporters – underlines that, for Butler, the use of outcast was a vital aspect not only of her own thinking but of her political strategy in conducting her campaign. She was convinced that ‘the making of prostitutes into a class has ruined all rescue work’; Jesus, she argued

‘never talked about love of *souls*, and never judged people as a class. He always took the man, the woman, or the child as a person. Jesus respected that sacred thing. Individuality.’¹⁴⁵

It is the observation of this thesis that ‘outcast’ was Butler’s chosen term for referring to the prostitutes and other marginalised women she befriended, as she campaigned against the sexual double standard and state regulated prostitution. Butler used the expression ‘outcast’ rather as people today might choose to use the expression

¹⁴² *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (London, 1883) p.5

¹⁴³ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Charlotte Wilson, 19 May 1875, cited in Jordan (2001) p.172

¹⁴⁴ Letter from Josephine E Butler to Fanny Forsaith, 1905, quoted in Jordan (2001) p.3

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Her Grandchildren, December 1906, quoted in Petrie (1971) p.57

‘enslaved’ rather than ‘slave’, ‘prostituted’ rather than ‘prostitute’. Butler’s usage was thus deliberate and purposeful and gives a crucial insight into her attitude towards the outcast and into what she believed was God’s relationship to the women others described as ‘sinners’, ‘fallen’, and ‘brazen harlots’.¹⁴⁶

Her chosen usage is seen for example when she is asked to speak on the moral reclaimability of prostitutes. Quoting others she says a fallen woman is deemed to be ‘unsexed’, a ‘mere animal’, a ‘barbarian’ a ‘foul sewer’,¹⁴⁷ a ‘common prostitute’.¹⁴⁸ These ‘sceptics’, she says, call them ‘hardened devils’ and pariahs but Butler calls them outcast.¹⁴⁹ The earlier harsh expressions echo the language of those ‘sceptics’ she is trying to persuade. The later term outcast is how Butler wishes these women to be seen.

While Butler’s use of the expression ‘outcast’ has been widely noted, her decision to use this description of the women with whom she was concerned has received little attention. Scholars have tended to equate the word ‘prostitute’ with Butler’s use of ‘outcast’ or ‘outcast woman’, and to substitute it when discussing her words. This is an important point since, for Butler, ‘outcast’ had a much wider definition than ‘prostitute’: she applied outcast to any woman who fell foul of the sexual double standard in Victorian society and was excluded whether she became a prostitute or not.

¹⁴⁶ See Letter from Josephine E. Butler to the Misses Priestman, 27 February 1888, in Jordan and Sharp, vol.5 pp.109-111, p.110.

¹⁴⁷ *The Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes, read by Mrs. Josephine Butler at a Conference of Delegates held at Freemason's Tavern, May 5&6, 1870* (London, 1870) in J & S, vol. 1, pp.121-127, p.124

¹⁴⁸ *ibid* p.126

¹⁴⁹ *ibid* p.122

Similarly, Butler can describe Hagar who was a second wife or concubine but not a prostitute as the typical ‘outcast’, so it is misleading to simply equate the two.¹⁵⁰

Butler does not explain why she chose to use the word ‘outcast’, and other scholars do not seem to have commented on it. The use of the expression in contemporary culture was surely one reason why Butler employed it. However, Butler’s adoption of this usage seems interesting in that ‘outcast’ describes the woman’s status and not her employment or moral state. The terms usually used in the Bible – prostitute and sinner – would carry with them a reference to the woman’s employment and moral state respectively. Furthermore, Butler does not use a third term with a biblical reference point, namely ‘fallen woman’, which through its connotations of Eve being responsible for humanity’s fall from grace, arguably denominates the woman as responsible for everything wrong with the world.

‘Outcast’ defines the woman over against someone else, and places the onus on him or her for casting out the woman. Research shows that the biblical use of ‘outcast’ is significant given that all but one usage in the Old Testament is a positive message of hope.¹⁵¹ The outcast/s are being included back by God, and those who excluded them are being judged for the wrong that they have done. Significantly, their wrongdoing includes by implication casting out the outcasts. This can be seen, for example, in Jeremiah 30:16,17:

‘Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured... For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, *saying*, This *is* Zion, whom no man seeketh after.’

¹⁵⁰ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) chapter X

¹⁵¹ One reference, Jeremiah 49:36, is rather different since it refers to God ‘scattering the outcasts of Elam’

Scholars delineating the influence of Butler's father upon her, have cited her recollection that John Grey frequently read aloud from the family Bible and that he often quoted Isaiah 58:6.¹⁵²

‘Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?’

This significant quotation sums up John's hatred of injustice and is applicable to Butler, too, in her own campaigns against oppression. However, a careful reading shows that John's influence on Josephine can be seen, not just in her concern for justice, but also in her specific concern for the outcast, since, reading on into the next verse, the Isaiah passage continues:

‘Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?’ (Isaiah 58:7)

In her second book, *The Education and Employment of Women* (1868), Butler gives her own rendering of Is.58 v.6-7 using the word outcast – ‘and that thou bring the poor that are outcast to thy house?’¹⁵³ Thus, in her very choice of the word outcast to express her relation and God's to the women for whom she is concerned, the influence of the Bible, and her father's reading of it, are revealed to be crucial.

There is also a clear link in the Bible between slavery and the use of the term ‘outcast’. Another verse in Isaiah refers to ‘the outcasts in the land of Egypt’ who ‘shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem’ (Isa. 27:13). This is a reference to the enslavement of the Israelites by the pharaohs prior to the Exodus (Ex.1-15), and to their being able to worship God after their deliverance (Ex. 15:13,17). The same slavery connotation is found again in another reference in Isaiah: God's followers are told to

¹⁵² See e.g. Nolland (2004) p.24; Flammang (1998) p.155

¹⁵³ *The Education and Employment of Women* (Liverpool, 1868), p.26

‘hide the outcasts’ from the heat of the day and not to ‘bewray’ – i.e. betray – the one ‘that wandereth’ (Isa. 16:3). In apocalyptic mode the next verse states that oppression is at an end.

The ex-slave, Josiah Henson, quoted this passage and applied it to escaped slaves finding refuge in Canada. His chapter ‘Canada, My home’, begins with the words ‘Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab’ (Isa. 16:4).¹⁵⁴ Given his popularity as a preacher whilst in Britain, it is possible that Butler heard him or read accounts of his preaching. Furthermore, given that she attended the Great Exhibition of 1851, along with her father,¹⁵⁵ Butler may well have read the narrative of Josiah Henson since the author, was an exhibitor there. Indeed, as the editor of his narrative put it, Josiah

‘heard with sorrow that he was the only “black exhibitor” at the Great fair’, the other ‘men of colour... present were there not as exhibitors but as exhibits!’¹⁵⁶

John Grey and Butler would have been interested in Henson’s activities in Canada, since he founded and ran a school and community that was compared with Oberlin Institute in Ohio which had received prominent support from anti-slavery campaigners

¹⁵⁴ *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself*, published by the Anti-Slavery Society of Boston, Massachusetts, in 1849. See Jessie L. Beattie, *Black Moses: The Real Uncle Tom* (Toronto: 1957).

¹⁵⁵ Glen Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity: The Campaigns of Josephine Butler* (New York, 1971), p.30. While she was in London at this time she had her portrait painted by George Richmond that now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. See Jan Marsh, ‘This Portrait: Josephine Elizabeth Butler (nee Grey), by George Richmond, 1851’, *The National Portrait Gallery*. [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/Extended/mw00968/Josephine-Elizabeth-Butler-nee-Grey>, accessed 7th Sept. 2013]

¹⁵⁶ *The Life of Josiah Henson* (1849) p. 185. See also Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, ‘Henson, Josiah (1789–1883)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/75449>, accessed 7th Sept. 2013]

in the Grey's locale of Newcastle, including financial donations from at least three people who became Butler's supporters.¹⁵⁷

An article written by Harriet Martineau in support of Oberlin Institute was republished by Newcastle anti-slavery supporters. The article was entitled *The Martyr Age of the United States of America: With an Appeal on Behalf of the Oberlin Institute in Aid of the Abolition of Slavery.*' This college was of enormous importance for those who supported equal rights since in 1835 it became the first to admit African Americans and also in 1837 the first American college to admit women. The strength of the Grey family's involvement in anti-slavery campaigning would have been a natural vehicle by which Butler would have found out about Oberlin College.¹⁵⁸

Thus it can be seen that the term 'outcast' was employed, both in the Bible and in anti-slavery thought, to apply to the ending of the oppression of the slave by supporting rather than betraying the slave's escape. Butler's application of 'outcast' to the women for whom she was concerned carries with it that resonance. Butler's chosen word, 'outcast', defines this woman by her exclusion – she has been judged and cast into outer darkness. Literally and metaphorically a door has been closed on her. Victorian society used the Bible to condemn outcast women; Butler used it to include them, to signify God's inclusion of them, and His judgement on those who excluded them.

The other references to 'outcast' in the Old Testament amplify the connotations of this word that Butler was drawing on. Jeremiah 30:16 has the double reference to the action

¹⁵⁷ Harriet Martineau, *The Martyr Age of the United States of America: with An Appeal on behalf of the Oberlin Institute in aid of the Abolition of Slavery* (Edinburgh, 1840).

¹⁵⁸ See Marilyn Robinson, 'Who was Oberlin', *When I Was a Child I Read Books: Essays*, (New York, 2012) pp. 167-182. For a discussion of the significance of Pastor Jean Frederic Oberlin for Butler, see Chapter Four

of God and the action, or rather inaction, of his people. However, some references to outcast only refer to the action of God and some only to the conduct commanded of his people. There is a clear implication of broadness in God's ingathering in Isaiah 56:8:

‘The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.’¹⁵⁹

In addition to the term ‘outcast’, Butler uses related words and concepts. She refers to God ‘gathering in’ ‘outcast humanity’ as she expounds Isaiah 54, and here she would seem to be including the whole of humankind, rather than only women. She says that

‘outcast humanity is addressed by God, under the form of a woman despised and forsaken in the most marvellously tender and pathetic manner’.¹⁶⁰

Similarly notable is her use here of the words ‘despised and forsaken’ which are used in Isaiah of the Suffering Servant and applied by Christians to Christ. Butler thus seems to be drawing a parallel between the way Christ was mistreated and the way that outcast woman was mistreated.

In the context of her reapplication of the Parable of the Prodigal Son as the Parable of the Prodigal Daughter, Butler suggests that outcast woman is one of the most disinherited creatures on earth.¹⁶¹ And the most poignant part of this Parable had always seemed to her to be ‘and no man gave unto him.’¹⁶² (Luke 15:16) In contrast to those she criticises for oppressing the outcast, Butler portrays her whole purpose and that of her husband George, as working to gather in the outcast or disinherited.¹⁶³ This is also a

¹⁵⁹ See too Psalms 147:2 and Isaiah 11:12

¹⁶⁰ *Lady of Shunem* (1894), p.40

¹⁶¹ See *The Lady of Shunem* (1894), pp.79-81. Butler's treatment of this Parable is discussed below in Chapter Eight

¹⁶² ‘A Word to Christian Sceptics’, *Storm-Bell* (November 1898), pp.150-153, in Jordan and Sharp, vol.1, pp.283-288, p.286

¹⁶³ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.186.

deeply biblical concept with its echo of the activity of God in gathering in the outcasts.¹⁶⁴

There are two New Testament references to God casting people out. Firstly, John 6:37: ‘him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.’ No evidence has been discovered thus far of Butler using this verse specifically even though it would seem to be a natural scriptural argument for welcoming back the outcast. Speculatively, perhaps Butler regarded this verse as too redolent of the priority of the sinner’s moving towards God in repentance rather than the activity of God in gathering in those whom man had cast out. Butler, unlike others who warned prostitutes to turn from their ways and live, did not tell them to repent and would not, as the warden of a penitentiary did, say to a woman who had decided to leave ‘You go to your destruction, but may God still have mercy on you’.¹⁶⁵ As Jordan rightly points out, to

‘the outcasts of society ... Josephine offered food, shelter and tender nursing, as well as training and employment. She never spoke to them of their sin, never asked about their past life, but instead offered them the possibility of a new life.’¹⁶⁶

Secondly, Matthew 25:40. As Helen Mathers points out, when Butler says that dishonour done to any ‘sister’ is ‘dishonour done to *me*’ – she is clearly referencing Jesus’ words ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ (KJV)¹⁶⁷ The context is the parable of the sheep and the goats,

¹⁶⁴ Isaiah 42:3

¹⁶⁵ See Anon., ‘A House of Mercy’, in *The Englishwoman’s Journal* vol.1: Part 2 (1858) pp.13-27, p.19.

¹⁶⁶ Jane Jordan, ‘Josephine Butler and the Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes’ in Milbank, A. (ed.), *Beating the Traffic: Josephine Butler and Anglican Social Action Today* (Winchester, 2007), pp. 12-34, p.3 .

¹⁶⁷ Helen Mathers, “‘Tis Dishonour Done to *Me*”: Self-Representation in the Writings of Josephine Butler’ in Daggars, J. and Neal, D., *Sex Gender and Religion: Josephine Butler Revisited* (New York, 2006) pp.37-53, p.48

where people are judged on the basis of their treatment of prisoners, the thirsty and so on. Those who help them in Jesus' name are welcomed in to their rest, but those who do not are themselves cast out into outer darkness with the words, 'Depart from me' (25:41). The theme here is Christ's solidarity with the oppressed. It has been recognised that Butler's theme is solidarity with them too. However, Butler seems to be suggesting more than this: by arguing that the outcast is quintessentially one of the 'least' she is saying not merely that Jesus would approve of her statement of solidarity with her sisters, but that it is Jesus who is being dishonoured in the person of the outcast.¹⁶⁸

She quotes Jesus' censure of those to whom he says, 'I was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison, and ye came not unto me'. Butler paraphrases and applies the passage to the outcasts as she says of them 'Who like these are hungry..., who stripped as these, and robbed...? Who smitten to the soul...?'¹⁶⁹ Jesus' words in Matt. 25:42-5 parallel Isaiah 58, John Grey's favourite text, with overlapping themes of poverty, loss and need. From feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and taking the homeless into one's home in Isaiah, to being hungry, stripped, robbed, and smitten to the soul in Butler's paraphrase. The actual Matthean text includes being imprisoned, which was also a constant theme of Butler's in relation to the prostitute. Jesus goes on to say that those who have helped the needy have, in fact, helped him: 'In as much as ye did it to one of the least of these ye did it unto me'. Therefore in her naming of the outcast as 'one of the least of these', Butler is saying that Jesus is identified with the outcast, and that to help the outcast is to help him. This is a daring suggestion, since Butler is not here speaking of the repentant Magdalene and identifying Christ with her. Butler is speaking

¹⁶⁸ See Jordan (2001) p.174

¹⁶⁹ 'The Lovers of the Lost', in Jordan & Sharp, vol 1, pp. 93-120, p.98

of outcast women generally, those described as sinners by her contemporaries and by the Bible.

Thus Butler seems confident that her stance towards the outcast is in line with that of Scripture and Jesus. Her opponents may make their arguments from Scripture about sinners being judged and punished, but Butler sees in Scripture another approach, a counter voice, and expresses it forcefully in her words, and, what is more, in her actions.

Butler commends those who similarly take the side of the outcast and she recognises what it cost them. In paying tribute to her colleague, James Stansfeld, she employs kenotic language as she states that he set 'aside chances of political prestige in order to descend with us'.¹⁷⁰ Butler here conjures up a vivid picture of the world the outcasts inhabit. Her references to a 'world of doomed women' and to descending 'into the inferno of human woe' imply these women are in hell. Besides being of little interest to society and being regarded as 'worthless' by 'men of the world', an expression which may here connote those who consort with prostitutes, there is a spiritual cost to the outcast. They are, in Butler's view, 'cast out from the light of heaven' as well as 'from the favour of earth'. This raises the question whether it is God or man casting them out from 'the light of heaven'.

Butler clearly believes that light from heaven can illuminate both her and others. In the introduction to *The Lady of Shunem* she states her aim as being to share 'the light' which God 'has caused to fall, for me, on the words of scripture'.¹⁷¹ Here God is the agent causing the light to fall, but can human beings exclude others from that light?

¹⁷⁰*Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London, 1896), p.244.

¹⁷¹ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.1

Butler believes that human beings can obstruct or obscure the revelation of God and make it harder for others to see Him; she would seem to be saying that outcast women are shut out from the light of heaven by the wrong actions of man. Possibly, she means in the manner of the slave owners, who she argued, whilst naming themselves as Christian oppressed the slaves; or possibly because these outcasts are treated as irredeemable sinners who should have no expectation of forgiveness or access to God or respectable Christian society.¹⁷²

Though they may be treated as unworthy of favour by their fellow mortals and excluded by them from any expectation that heavenly light might shine upon them, Butler makes clear that Christ does not so regard or treat the outcasts. In her memoriam of her sister, Hatty, Butler uses the section heading ‘Christ’s pity for the Outcast’.¹⁷³ She refers to the fact that these women ‘cast themselves before Jesus’, and as quoted at the beginning of this thesis, asserts that the souls of outcasts were redeemed by Christ and are as precious to God as men’s souls.¹⁷⁴ In 1870 Butler contrasted contemporary ‘efforts on the Magdalenes behalf’ with the 1852 statement of Bishop Armstrong who concerned for rescue work, lamented that ‘penitents’ who ‘cast themselves at our feet’ experience rejection.¹⁷⁵

The central importance of the designation ‘outcast’ for Butler is shown by her earliest and closest associates echoing her use of this term. W. T. Stead and Hugh Price Hughes,

¹⁷² ‘Diary of Josephine Butler, containing “Private Thoughts”’ (1856-1865) Northumberland Record Office, ZBU E/3/A/4

¹⁷³ *In Memoriam, Harriet Meuricoffre* (London, 1901) p.91

¹⁷⁴ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.86; *The Hour Before the Dawn*, in Jordan and Sharp, vol 3, pp.243-308, p.260 .

¹⁷⁵ ‘The Lovers of the Lost’, *Contemporary Review*, vol.13 (Jan-March 1870) pp.16-40 in Jordan & Sharp, vol 1, pp. 93-120, p.97

alongside whom she worked closely, employ the term and other contemporaries attest her as the ‘friend of the outcast women’. Butler’s grandson, A.S.G. Butler, who came to know his grandmother well and shared her faith, used it repeatedly, just as Butler did, and showed a clear understanding of her approach to the outcast.¹⁷⁶ George Butler used ‘outcast’ in a rare record of what he said from the public platform:

‘honour is due to the female sex. Who can contemplate, without emotion, the prospect of a sister or daughter made an outcast from society, through the base selfishness and unrestrained passions of men?’¹⁷⁷

Looking back, towards the end of her life, on the intense spiritual experiences and conflicts of her youth, Butler disclosed that at one point she had been almost overwhelmed by

‘the saddest miseries of earth, the injustices, the inequalities, the cruelties practised by man on man, by man on woman.’

Although she had long understood that God was ‘Love’, she struggled with the weight of the world and said she would have been spiritually defeated had not the Saviour himself

‘imparted to the child wrestler something of the virtue of His own midnight agony... in Gethsemane’.

It is fascinating that Butler, in old age, described the resolution of this spiritual crisis, not in triumphalist terms, or with respect to some new intellectual insight that she had

¹⁷⁶ W. T. Stead, *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch* (London, 1887) p.18; C. Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity* (Cardiff, 1999) p.37; A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (London, 1954) p.80, see too p.84; *The Shield*, ‘Newspaper Biographies of Mrs. Butler & Press Notices of Her Death: Tribute by Miss Forsaith’, New Series Vol.X:92 (Jan 1907), pp.2-16, p.10

¹⁷⁷ *Great Meeting of Working Men*. Speech Given by Josephine E. Butler to the Working Men’s Meeting, Richmond Hall, Liverpool, Friday 18 March 1870, Jordan and Sharp, vol.2 pp.67-76, p.70. For George’s speech see pp.68-71

been granted into the problem of evil, but as a deeper identification both with Christ in his suffering *and* with the outcast woman of the Gospel narrative:

‘Looking my Liberator in the face, can my friends wonder that I have taken my place, (I took it long ago)... by the side of her, the "woman in the city which was a sinner"’.¹⁷⁸

If Butler’s recollections are to be believed, it would appear that, from a very early stage, the identification of Christ with the outcast was a central dimension of her thinking.

Nox Praecessit

This research has uncovered an early source in which Butler addresses the cause of the outcast. In 1865 Butler anonymously published *Nox Praecessit: Dies Autem Appropinquavit* (‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand’), but it is not attributed to her in any published source or library record.¹⁷⁹ The catalogue entry in the Women’s Library states that her contemporary, Helen Wilson, believed that ‘the workbook’ belonged to Butler. However, it is not a workbook, but, rather, a published work of 62 pages, addressed to men and urging social purity. It is undoubtedly by Butler. The copy in the Women’s Library contains a handwritten letter, dated June 27 1933, addressed to Miss Turner (who catalogued Butler’s writings) from Helen Wilson, stating that she had found the work among her father’s books and believed it to be by Butler on the basis that, from memory, certain passages seemed familiar. The Wilson family were amongst Butler’s most valued supporters and had worked closely with Josephine over a number of years. Henry J. Wilson was Honorary Secretary of the Northern Counties Electoral League For the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. His wife, Charlotte, was

¹⁷⁸ *An Autobiographical Memoir* (London, 1909) Edited by George W. and Lucy A. Johnson, pp.15, 16. The editors note that these memories were ‘recorded in 1900’ (p.15)

¹⁷⁹ *Nox Praecessit: Dies Autem Appropinquavit* (Edinburgh, 1865), henceforth referred to as *Nox Praecessit*

Butler's friend and co-campaigner, for example in the Pontefract election campaign, and their daughter Helen was a medical doctor.

Reading *Nox Praecessit* it is easy to see why Helen Wilson recognised it as Butler's voice, since much of the material was republished by her as *The Hour Before Dawn* in 1876, again addressed to men, and again anonymous. Furthermore, Butler revisited this theme for a third time in her 1903 work, *The Morning Cometh*, which she describes as 'for my sons'.¹⁸⁰ The titles of all three works echo the language of Romans 13 verse 12, and the themes of these works echo the Romans passage, with its injunction not to gratify the lusts of the flesh but to put off the works of darkness. What is of interest is that this discovery reveals *Nox Praecessit* to be Butler's earliest known publication, and rather than being designed to further the cause of education and employment for women, it was on the topic of men's morality that Butler was first concerned to be heard.

Furthermore, this work contains an early rehearsal of the themes of the outcast and the equality before God of men and women, as Butler asks her male readers to consider 'the outcast woman, sobbing her poor broken heart out in a corner of the Lock Hospital, consumed by disease and misery', before posing the question, what

'makes her a greater sinner than yourself? Be honest! She is lost to society; you are petted by society. She is killed by the poison she drank; you survive.'¹⁸¹

A page later Butler also makes her fundamental assertions: 'The soul of the poorest prostitute was redeemed by Christ as much as your own', and 'God is no respecter of

¹⁸⁰ Full title *The Morning Cometh. A Letter to my Children, printed for private circulation*, (Newcastle: T. M. Grierson, 1903)

¹⁸¹ *Nox Praecessit* (1865) p.47

persons.¹⁸² The published expression of such firm convictions in 1865 must have seemed to both Josephine and George a compelling reason why Butler should take up the cause of repeal in 1869 and become more than an anonymous voice of the outcast.

Could Butler Claim To Be the Voice of the Outcast?

Josephine Butler faced an enormous challenge in becoming a voice on the public stage. Not only was the cultural context generally unfavourable towards this kind of female activity and leadership, but the specific subject matter she was dealing with was not considered fit for any woman to speak of, let alone from a public platform. Her contemporary, Benjamin Scott, wrote that,

‘It required great courage for anyone to speak in public on this subject, and it required unparalleled courage for a woman to do so, at a time when women were expected to be silent in public affairs’.¹⁸³

Ann Loades empathetically describes the issues Butler faced:

‘she found her voice in causes comparable to John Grey’s, but she also had to find the courage to raise questions about the perversity of human sexual behaviour which were virtually beyond his comprehension.’¹⁸⁴

Joan Hedrick’s biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe provides interesting points of comparison with Butler including in the matter of public speech. It has to be remembered that despite Beecher Stowe’s novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), being so extraordinarily popular and influential, when she was invited to visit Britain and public meetings were arranged for her, she did not give her own speech but sat silently in the audience in a side gallery whilst her husband read her speech or made one of his own.¹⁸⁵

If Beecher Stowe as the voice of the slave, albeit a controversial voice as viewed from

¹⁸² *ibid* p.49

¹⁸³ Quoted in Jordan (2001) p.114

¹⁸⁴ Ann Loades, *Feminist Theology: Voices from the Past* (Oxford, 2001), p.79

¹⁸⁵ J. D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: a Life* (New York, 1994), p.443

the perspective of later history, could only write and not speak in public, then the task facing Butler and the way she carried it out is a truly remarkable achievement.

Butler campaigned tirelessly for women's education, employment, rights over their own property and bodies and the vote. Butler was not only interested in securing Cambridge accredited examinations to test and attest women's abilities but also in the potential for women who had had far fewer educational, familial and social opportunities such as the ex-procurer Rebecca Jarrett.¹⁸⁶ The breadth of her vision is seen in her enthusiastic support for the Salvation Army's work with women such as Jarrett which will be discussed in Chapter Four. From her obituary for Catherine Booth it would seem that Butler had a pattern of attending Salvation Army meetings which were commissioning members for service.¹⁸⁷ Butler's class prejudice may come out in her remark about 'even if they do drop their h's' but more importantly her support for such women and the organisation that was enabling and equipping them to speak in public, stands out and her delight in what they were achieving.¹⁸⁸

Similarly, she consistently urged women to speak for themselves, lamenting on one occasion that in Switzerland none were found to do so, and later applauding the fact that SA women in Switzerland were doing just that.¹⁸⁹ On another occasion, when a delegation of French women went to address the town elders Butler did not go with them or speak for them. Her sense of what was 'respectable' shows in her comment that

¹⁸⁶ See Jordan (2001) p.217-235; see p.333 f/n 5 for details of the four different versions of Jarrett's memoirs, all titled 'Rebecca Jarrett' and held at the Salvation Army Heritage Centre. For Butler's relationship to Jarrett, see Walkowitz (1992) pp. 81-120.

¹⁸⁷ 'Catherine Booth', in *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 58 July 1 1890, pp.639-654 p.653

¹⁸⁸ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Forsaith, 28 May 1897 3 JBL 37/34

¹⁸⁹ *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London, 1896), p.158, quoting a letter to M. Humbert. See chapter 4 for Butler's encouraging other women to speak up.

she was pleased that they looked clean but she was also pleased that they looked like the working women they were. Her remark that she had rehearsed them ‘the dear gooses’ might be said to be patronising but surely suggests more genuine affection and appreciation for what a daunting task it might be for women to speak in a meeting for the first time- particularly women who would be regarded as of an inferior class by the men holding the meeting. On this occasion, both Butler and her protégés clearly felt that this was a positive experience for the working women concerned and it would have given them confidence to speak up again.¹⁹⁰

Nevertheless, consideration must be given to what she said and whether by speaking for the outcast she was inaccurately representing the outcast, or preventing her from speaking for herself.

Walkowitz rightly drew attention to the way Butler characterised the route into prostitution as being via aristocratic men seducing innocent girls thus overlooking incest, female sexual desire, sexual encounters with working class men and the role of other women such as their mothers in encouraging girls to become prostitutes.¹⁹¹ This raises the question of whether Butler was ignorant about the broader nature of the routes into prostitution, or simply chose to keep quiet about them. Her evidence to a Parliamentary committee as early as 1871 demonstrates that she had been told by prostitutes of incest and of parents being involved in getting daughters into a life of prostitution.¹⁹² So she was not ignorant of these factors and she was prepared to talk

¹⁹⁰ E. Moberly Bell (1962) p.223

¹⁹¹ Walkowitz (1992), p.92

¹⁹² See Report of the ‘Royal Commission upon the Administration and operation of the CD Acts, PP1871 (408 and 408-1)’; *The Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes, read by Mrs. Josephine Butler at a Conference of Delegates held at Freemason's Tavern, May 5&6, 1870* (London, 1870) in J & S, vol 1, pp.121-127, p.126

about them with her audience of Parliamentary men. Her silence on these matters in her campaign speeches and publications therefore suggests that she judged it unwise to air these matters lest potential supporters were alienated. In being the voice of the outcast Butler was therefore being a selective voice.

In what she does say the question arises of how to understand Butler's language and assess whether it actually expresses the voice of the outcast. Jordan and Mathers comment on the melodramatic language in the spiritual biographies Butler wrote of some of the outcast women she had known.¹⁹³ Walkowitz gives an extended application of the genre of melodrama to Butler's accounts of outcasts and of Rebecca Jarrett and the Maiden Tribute Scandal.¹⁹⁴ Whilst Butler's language can be described as melodramatic, there are some dangers here, lest the manner of Butler's dramatic telling of these stories leads to an implication that all she was doing was assembling narrative devices that had been used before so that she could write completely fictitious, but powerful propaganda. That real life can be melodramatic is shown by the life of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman who deliberately killed one of her children and quite possibly deliberately drowned another, rather than let them grow up in slavery. The potential melodrama in Garner's story captured the imagination of subsequent writers and artists who turned her story into an opera, book or painting.¹⁹⁵ In a statement that draws attention to every author's choice of style and genre, Nolland points out that

¹⁹³ Helen Mathers, "'Tis Dishonour Done to *Me*": Self-Representation in the Writings of Josephine Butler' in Dagers and Neal (2006) pp.37-53, p.44

¹⁹⁴ Walkowitz (1992) chapter 3

¹⁹⁵ See Steven Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South* (New York, 1998). Garner's story will be discussed in Chapter Two below

writing in a recognisable genre allows one's readers to focus on the important aspects of what is being related.¹⁹⁶

A second danger is that dramatic language on the part of the author can lead to equally dramatic expressions on the part of the commentator. Mathers suggests that Butler was portraying herself as 'the saviour',¹⁹⁷ which term Mathers appears to equate inaccurately with being 'the instrument of salvation', which she uses in the next paragraph.¹⁹⁸ Being an instrument of God is a recognisable Christian expression based on verses such as Isaiah 41:15 'I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument.' Butler's words about 'laying the lost sheep in the bosom of the Shepherd', fit with her perception of her role as an instrument of salvation—a spiritual guide, an evangelist or minister.¹⁹⁹ However, Butler speaking of the outcast refers to 'her saviour *and mine*'.²⁰⁰

Walkowitz describes as condescending Butler's likening Jarrett to Mary Magdalene.²⁰¹ However, the person of Mary Magdalene, who has been the subject of a long history of representation and critique is not contextualised here in terms of a discussion of either theological thought or cultural appropriations.²⁰² Her appropriation in subsequent generations has been diverse, and though the term Magdalene has fixed her in people's imaginations as a 'fallen woman', the biblical record does not essentialise her fallen status. Mary Magdalene's narrative is the story of a woman saved by a male saviour. As such her narrative may be unacceptable, unwelcome or incomprehensible to some

¹⁹⁶ Lisa Nolland, 'Josephine Butler and the Historian: Critic and Friend', in Daggers and Neal (2006) pp.113-134, p.118

¹⁹⁷ Mathers (2006) pp.37-53, p.44

¹⁹⁸ *ibid* p.45

¹⁹⁹ As quoted in Mathers (2006) pp.37-53, p.45

²⁰⁰ *Italics mine*

²⁰¹ Walkowitz (1992) p.118

²⁰² See C. Joynes & C. Rowland (eds.) *From the Margins 2: Women of the New Testament and Their Afterlives* (Sheffield, 2009), pp.1-3 and chapters cited

feminists, but she is nonetheless a part of traditional Christian belief, and her biblical story does not end with her being ‘the ultimate female victim’.²⁰³ In the biblical record, she is saved to become the first witness to the resurrection – meaning not just an observer of it, but the first proclaimer of it (John 20:10-18). This is an important task not given to a male disciple such as Peter or John. Thus, taking Butler’s thought on its own religious terms, she is surely highlighting the parallel between Mary Magdalene and Rebecca Jarrett, not only as rescued prostitutes, but also as female witnesses to Christ – in Jarrett’s case working alongside the Salvation Army. Jarrett may be pilloried by the courts for lying, for her immoral past and her role in the purchase of an underage girl, but in Butler’s terms of reference she is now an evangelist rescuing women out of prostitution and proclaiming the Christian gospel.²⁰⁴

Walkowitz’s analysis of the literary features and language of melodrama and their parallels with Butler’s work is interesting and casts light on how Butler might have targeted her narrative and how some of Butler’s audience might have interpreted her words. However, Butler’s literary knowledge and influences were not restricted to melodrama, and it is surely also necessary to explore the primary influence of biblical language and narrative techniques on Butler’s own productions. Walkowitz’s criticism of Butler’s use of the words ‘sister’ or ‘daughter’ when addressing outcast women is another case in point.

²⁰³ Walkowitz (1992) p.118

²⁰⁴ Jordan (2001) p.219. For a discussion of the significance of Mary Magdalene for Butler see Jane Jordan, ‘Josephine Butler and the Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes’ in Milbank (2007), pp. 12-33, p.28 and Alison Milbank, ‘Josephine Butler’s Apocalyptic Vision of the Prostitute and Modern Debates on Prostitution’ in Milbank (2007) pp.89-104, pp.96,97

Butler believed in ‘the great Father-Mother, God’, who was ‘the God of families’.²⁰⁵ In *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* (1869) she wrote of the importance of including non- family members as residents in the family home such as those she described in contemporary language as outcasts and lunatics.²⁰⁶ This was something she put into practice as prostitutes lived with the Butlers as a family – including, as Jordan puts it, ‘astonishing as it sounds’, in a bedroom next door to the schoolroom.²⁰⁷ Describing outcast women as her children or sisters can be construed as patronising as can George’s describing them as ‘dears’.²⁰⁸ However, it can also be seen as expressive of the love and commitment Butler showed to the outcasts. The New Testament consistently describes members of the Christian community or church in familial language.²⁰⁹

The fact that 1 Timothy is an epistle written to a young man urging him to ‘set an example for the believers in life... in faith and in purity’(I Tim. 4:12), ‘to treat younger women as sisters with absolute purity’(1Tim.5:2) and ‘older women as mothers’, must surely be part of why Butler spoke so warmly of ‘that beautiful letter to Timothy’,²¹⁰ even though 1 Timothy is also the location of the words ‘But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence’ (I Tim 2:16).

Furthermore, as Catherine Hall has shown, the language of sisterhood and brotherhood was also of significance in the 19th Century church. In analysing various aspects of the dynamic of perceived racial difference at play in the church in colonial Jamaica, Hall demonstrates the differing standpoint of Church of England clergy and Non-Conformist

²⁰⁵ *The Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.3. Chapter 5 entitled, ‘The God of Families’, p. 93-119

²⁰⁶ *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* (1869) p.xl

²⁰⁷ Jordan (2001) p.70-72

²⁰⁸ *ibid* p.71

²⁰⁹ See for example Acts 22:13, Roms.14:10, 1 Cor. 6:5

²¹⁰ A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (London, 1954), p.216

missionaries. It is a telling point that the Oxbridge educated Rev. George Bridges, rector of St. Ann's Bay parish,²¹¹ made 'an attack' on the Wesleyan mission in St. Ann's Bay since, as Hall puts it, he

'could not tolerate the claim which the enslaved were making: to the right to worship a Christian God, for that God was always a dissenting God.'²¹²

Part of his objection was that he did not want the enslaved to be addressed as 'brother' and 'sister.'²¹³ In distinction to the Anglican Bridges, as Hall discusses, Baptists, black and white, regarded themselves as one family – 'the extended family' of Baptists, black and white. This family was 'defined not by blood but by religious kinship' and their modes of address for each other – 'friend', 'brother' and 'sister' – were 'all terms whose meanings crossed blood relationships and lines of friendship'.²¹⁴ In using the language of sisterhood, Butler who was familiar with the anti-slavery slogan, 'Am I not a woman and a sister', was aligning herself with radical non-conformist equality in the church, rather than Anglican hierarchical structures.²¹⁵ So when she describes outcast women who have died in her care as 'our children', it could be viewed as patronising, but it could also be viewed as an expression of commitment to them and an assertion of their 'religious kinship'. Thus consideration of the particular Christian and biblical influences on Butler's choice of language can be seen to give another perspective on her use of 'sister' and 'daughter'.

²¹¹ C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2002), p.101

²¹² *ibid* p.104

²¹³ *ibid*

²¹⁴ *ibid* p.94 Hall's book in its entirety examines the complexity of different beliefs and practices regarding 'brotherhood' and equality in the church, colony and metropole.

²¹⁵ See Chapter Four below for discussion of Butler's church allegiance.

Returning to the word ‘vessel’ (KJV), or in ordinary Victorian parlance, ‘instrument’ - Butler’s description of Rebecca Jarrett as ‘the first instrument that came to hand’, which at first sight seems dehumanising, has been heavily criticised by Walkowitz and Amanda Sebastyn as a callous use of Jarrett by Butler for her own ends.²¹⁶ However, Butler was much more likely to have been echoing scriptural language, and seeing Jarrett, rightly or wrongly, as God’s instrument used to achieve His purposes. In 2 Timothy 2:20 and 21, in the context of speaking of some ‘vessels of gold and of silver’, but some of ‘wood and earth’, and an injunction to ‘flee youthful lust’, those who do so are called ‘a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared for every good work.’²¹⁷

When Jarrett herself says,

‘The Salvation Army let Mr. Stead have me to be the poor tool to show it all up. I truly done it for God and for the poor child’;²¹⁸

these verses were probably what she was thinking of. In Christian parlance being a ‘poor tool’ or an earthen vessel was not an expression of being ill-used, but rather an expression of humility and an assertion of the sovereignty of God. As will be seen in Chapter Four, in similar biblically influenced language, Butler argued that the young SA women she was working alongside in Switzerland ‘were the instruments chosen of God to lead an attack against the kingdom of darkness’. She regarded this as an example of the mysterious ways of God and argued that her fellow workers for repeal should recognise this and apply it to the abolition cause.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Walkowitz (1992) p.118

²¹⁷ See too Romans 9:20-24

²¹⁸ Walkowitz (1992) p.115

²¹⁹ *SA in Switzerland* (1883) p.201

A further important issue raised by Antoinette Burton impinges on whether Butler could accurately claim to be the voice of the outcast. In 1891 Katherine Bushnell and Elizabeth Andrew were commissioned by the LNA to carry out research in India and find out the truth about the regulation of prostitutes for the British Army.²²⁰ Burton argues that

‘the repealers claim to have learned “the truth about Indian women” through the accounts of Bushnell and Andrew is extremely problematic’.²²¹

This is a very valid point since, as she says, the evidence comes from those ‘designated or assumed to be prostitutes’, and is relayed second hand through Bushnell and Andrew. Furthermore, an important point is that a translator was involved. Burton mentions this in passing but does not recognise that this is another complicating layer in the transmission of the prostitutes’ voices.²²² It may be impossible to discover both whether the women actually said what they were reported as saying and whether they were accurately representing the truth or just telling their interviewers what they wanted to hear.

Nevertheless, Josephine’s comment about feeling much more able to discuss her health and life with Elizabeth Garrett because she was a female doctor rather than a male is an apposite parallel here. ‘I was able to *tell* her so much more than I ever could or would tell to any *man*.’²²³ It is not unreasonable to suppose that at least some of the outcasts felt similarly once they realised that Butler and Bushnell and Andrew knew something

²²⁰ See Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (N Carolina, 1994), pp.157-164. The account of their findings was published in Elizabeth W. Andrew & Katherine C. Bushnell, *The Queen’s Daughters in India* (London, 1898) in Jordan & Sharp, vol.5 pp.244-326

²²¹ Burton (1994) p.164

²²² *ibid* p.158

²²³ Bell (1962) p.47

about the nature of prostitution and were not simply going to be shocked or judgemental. The fact that Butler believed that as a woman herself Garrett ‘entered much more into my mental state and way of life’, had the effect of Butler revealing more about herself. The same kind of effect must have been at work in some of the conversations with outcast women when conversing with a sympathetic listener.

In insisting that the outcast women rather than the soldiers remained the focus of the campaign in India, Butler was ensuring that people continued to listen to the women’s voices. Official reports were being issued by those in power but Bushnell and Andrew’s research bore out the fact that Butler was right to distrust them and believe that other voices needed to be listened to and that the counter voice of the outcast woman must be heard however complicated the issue of assessing the accuracy of the message heard or delivered. Butler was being extremely innovative here in sending Bushnell and Andrew. As she said when threatened with imprisonment by a police inspector during the Maiden Tribute Scandal, ‘we are detectives too’.²²⁴

In considering whether Butler only saw outcasts as victims, it is certainly true that, as a lady of her times, she was not going to discuss whether they became outcasts through following their own sexual desires. It is also true that she would have recognised the political advantage of playing on sympathy for the poor innocent who had been seduced and abandoned. However, whilst the general tenor of Butler’s portrayal of outcasts emphasises their victim status, a closer look shows her awareness at times of the agency of outcasts and their resistance to oppression.

²²⁴ Jordan (2001) p.228

Butler emphasises the strength of those who resist turning to prostitution despite their poverty.²²⁵ She also gives examples of resistance by women trapped in prostitution. The experiences of two young females, one recounted by Butler and one recounted by Bushnell and Andrew, illustrate both agency being shown by the girl/woman trapped in prostitution, and the overwhelming amount of power being exercised over them by men and women. Butler's account is of a girl who resisted the brothel owner's wishes and was imprisoned, starved and beaten with a leather thong that left unhealed stripes which were verified by Butler's doctor. Butler's comment that 'We seemed to stand before a victim of some cruel overseer of slaves in the cotton plantations of one of the Southern States of America in the past times', is surely apt since as Butler makes clear the girl's resistance for a sustained period of time was combatted by sadistic brute force.²²⁶

Bushnell and Andrew's account is of a woman named Itwaria who is determined to escape from prostitution in India but who ultimately decides to return to it because otherwise she will be refused permission to re-enter her town and will never be able to see her mother and sister again.²²⁷ This incident highlights another aspect of the power imbalance outcast women faced, as personal resistance and freedom had to be weighed against loyalty to family ties, and a choice made in these restrictive conditions. As Antoinette Burton says, the 'case of Itwaria...testifies both simply and dramatically to the power of regulation over Indian women's lives.'²²⁸ Both incidents showcase the potential cost to the outcast of resistance to those who gained by supplying, running or frequenting brothels whether part of the machinery of state regulated prostitution or not.

²²⁵ *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (London, 1869), p.xix ff

²²⁶ *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London, 1896) p.221

²²⁷ See Burton (1994) pp.160-161 f/n 153, & p.258

²²⁸ *ibid* p.161

In recognising both the agency of outcast women, but also the difficulty of their speaking out, did Butler decide to always speak for them, or did she seek to enable other women to speak for themselves?

Butler was not only interested in securing Cambridge accredited examinations to test and attest women's abilities, but also in the potential for women who had had far fewer educational, familial and social opportunities such as the ex-procurer Rebecca Jarrett. From her obituary for Catherine Booth it would seem that she had a pattern of attending Salvation Army meetings which were commissioning members for service.²²⁹ Butler's class prejudice may come out in her remark about Salvation Army women – 'even if they do drop their h's' – but more importantly, her support for such women and the organisation that was enabling and equipping them stands out, and her delight in what they were achieving.²³⁰ Similarly, she consistently urged women to speak for themselves, lamenting on one occasion that, in Switzerland, none were found to do so, and later applauding the fact that SA women in Switzerland were doing so.²³¹ On another occasion, when a delegation of French women went to address the town elders Butler did not go with them or speak for them. Her sense of what was 'respectable' shows in her comment that she was pleased that they looked clean but she was also pleased that they looked like working women. Her remark that she had rehearsed them 'the dear gooses' might be said to be patronising but surely suggests more genuine affection and appreciation for what a daunting task it might be for women to speak in a meeting for the first time particularly women such as these. Both Butler and her

²²⁹ 'Catherine Booth', in *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 58 July 1 1890, pp.639-654, p.653

²³⁰ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Forsaith, 28 May 1897 3 JBL 37/34

²³¹ *Personal Reminiscences* (London, 1896), p.158, quoting a letter to M. Humbert.

protégés clearly felt that this was a positive experience for the working women concerned and it would have given them confidence to speak up again.²³²

A significant area of growth in Butler studies has been the question of her relationship with issues of race and empire. Was Butler an imperial feminist?

In her important work exploring the ways in which Victorian feminism interacted with and was shaped by British imperial culture, Antoinette Burton draws attention to Butler's insistence that, 'the mistreatment of Indian women must remain the vitally important issue', rather than the soldiers becoming the primary focus of attempts to reduce prostitution.²³³ Burton points out that without Butler's emphasis on

'the need to keep to regulation as the central issue, the reform leadership might well have strayed away from empire as well as from repeal. Butler's personal charisma and the enormous respect repeal workers throughout Greater Britain had for her resulted in the incorporation of her imperial feminist philosophy into the very structure of repeal organizations and guaranteed that the imperial direction that she gave to the post-1886 campaign would continue to motivate the repeal program until World War I'.²³⁴

Burton gives a nuanced discussion of the roles Butler's Christian faith played in her approach to the issue of British powers regulating prostitution in the Empire.²³⁵ What is of particular interest to this thesis is Butler's trenchant criticism of the way in which a Christian empire had imposed this system, and the failure by missionaries to oppose the imperial power on this issue.²³⁶ This raises the question of whether more can be said when evaluating the various factors at work in moulding her rhetoric and actions.

²³² Bell (1962), p.223

²³³ *ibid* p.145

²³⁴ Burton (1994), p.167

²³⁵ *ibid* p.146

²³⁶ *The Revival and Extension of the Abolitionist Cause. A Letter to the Members of the Ladies' National Association*, (London, 1887), in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 5, pp.13-64, p.14

Two remarks that Butler made need mentioning at this point, since they relate to her attitude to questions of race and empire, and do not sit easily with the notion that she was entirely free from any racism. In listing the racially diverse pupils at Liverpool College she referred to 'Two half-civilised African princes', and, in a letter to her son Stanley, she was glad that the Haitian Ambassador, who for ten years had been her 'ebony black friend', was unaware that another of her friends had referred to him as a 'negro'. In Butler's view he was of superior descent, being 'of the race of Toussaint L'Ouverture, a King and patriot!'²³⁷

Butler is thus describing 'negroid' features as 'coarser', and regarding African societies as less 'civilised' than European ones. In this Butler was of her time, and she similarly generalised about German men.²³⁸ She said she had read, with 'pity and some amusement', the opinions of German delegates to the International Conference of the Federation held in London in 1898, and their general views on State and religion. Her final opinion of the German male was:

'The German standpoint, in religious as well as other matters, has always been distasteful to me. It is a male standpoint ...'²³⁹

Nevertheless, despite her generalisations, one of the criticisms she made of 'German men' at the Conference was that they had had 'no Christian sympathy with the Hindus who sat on the platform'.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Stanley Vevey, 10 Jan 1897

²³⁸ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to the Misses Priestmann, 3 May 1895

²³⁹ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Forsaith, 11 Feb 1899. See too her letter to the Misses Priestman, 3 May 1895. 'The German men are very insolent - unconsciously so perhaps they regard me as an inconvenient and unmanageable intruder into the Federation, an old woman who sets her opinion against the whole of German Male Wisdom.'

²⁴⁰ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Forsaith, 11 Feb 1899

Writing of Butler's initiating the Indian campaign in 1886, Jordan discusses how Butler's 'position on India was both Christian and political', and shows Butler's practical actions in reading 'the Indian Blue Book' in order to have evidence of the laws governing India, as well as urging that petitions be sent to Parliament and missionaries lobbied.²⁴¹ In a letter to her closest friends, the Priestmans, in October of that year, she makes clear that what James Stuart has told her about India 'has made my blood boil again'.²⁴² What has not been considered in analysing what made her so irate and so determined to oppose British imperial rule is her statement only four months earlier that 'I *am* republican.'²⁴³ The manner in which this was stated, in another letter to the same Quaker friends, suggests that this fact was not news to the recipients. Butler's closest family lived in Italy and Switzerland, and she makes various references to both the importance she places on republican values and to personal contact with leading European republicans such as Victor Hugo, Aurelio Saffi, Mazzini and Garibaldi. She also refers to the mutual admiration and support that existed between herself and Hugo, and herself and the American William Lloyd Garrison.²⁴⁴

Butler's Republican sympathies can be clearly seen in her biography of Pastor Jean Frederic Oberlin of Alsace. She draws a distinction between 'the broad principles' of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the 'excesses which accompanied the Revolution, and the anarchy which resulted from and succeeded the evils of the *ancient*

²⁴¹ Jordan (2001) p.241

²⁴² Letter to the Misses Priestman, quoted by Jordan (2001) p.240

²⁴³ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Mary Priestman, 11 June 1886 WL

²⁴⁴ See *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892), pp.284, 92, 338, 265-267
Republicanism as an influence upon Butler and as part of her frame of reference is further discussed in Chapters Two and Four below.

regime in France.’ The principles of the declaration are ‘practically identical with those upon which our own constitution is founded’, she states.²⁴⁵

She quotes M. Stoeber, an earlier biographer of Oberlin, as saying that these principles ‘tended to restore the dignity of man, to break the chains of feudalism, to emancipate agriculture and industry, to replace privilege by equality before the law, and arbitrary government by constitutional liberty.’²⁴⁶ She further approves of these principles by saying that the French Revolution which ‘in the prophetic words of Mirabeau, was “destined to make the tour of the world,” was marching on with giant steps’, in her own day.²⁴⁷

An assessment of Butler’s republicanism must, therefore, inform consideration of in what sense she can be described as ‘imperialist’. Once it is accepted that she was a republican, her arguments that a Christian empire should have Christian moral standards, and that a revolt against imperial rule will come if there is no reform, must be seen as complicating her relationship to imperial feminism. As Burton recognised, as a seasoned political campaigner, Butler was using arguments based on what those she opposed claimed about themselves, believing that her words would carry weight.²⁴⁸ It must be a less likely conclusion that she herself believed that the end of British imperial rule was something to be avoided. After all, her disapprobation of acquiring territory

²⁴⁵ *Life of Jean Frederic Oberlin, Pastor of the Ban de la Roche* (London, 1882), p.123

²⁴⁶ *ibid* p.124

²⁴⁷ *ibid* p.135

²⁴⁸ Burton (1994) p.149

through conquest was very clear and she was staunchly in favour of Home Rule for Ireland.²⁴⁹

This raises the question of whether in evaluating the various factors at work in moulding her Butler is in danger of being seen as primarily an imperialist who was using Christianity for imperial and feminist ends rather than as a Christian feminist who was using the claim of the British empire to be exercising Christian imperial rule to achieve her objective of liberating the outcast. Butler quoted her father's words from the Book of Revelation (11:15) 'The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ', and clearly this was part of her understanding of eschatology.²⁵⁰ It could be said that in her view, the British Empire should assist the growth of the Kingdom of God, but, in line with her general scepticism about human institutions she saw no indissoluble link between the two.

Butler as a Prophetic Voice

An examination of what Butler understood by the terms 'prophecy' and 'prophet', both in general terms and as far as her own calling was concerned, is the next consideration. Her work, *Prophets and Prophetesses* (1898), makes clear that prophecy could encompass foretelling the future: some could read "the signs of the times, according to the promise, 'He – the Holy Spirit – shall show you things to come'. However, she goes on to say that the word prophesy 'embraces more in its fulness of meaning' and 'is best translated by the learned, as "to show forth the mind of God" on any matter.'

²⁴⁹ See 'A Grave Question That Needs Answering by the Churches of Great Britain', *Sentinel*, March 1887, p.30; *Our Christianity Tested by the Irish Question* (London, 1887)

²⁵⁰ *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (Edinburgh, 1869) p.28

Prophesying for her meant primarily forth-telling the word of God rather than foretelling the future. She places great value on this:

‘What a high gift! What a holy endowment this, to be enabled to show or set forth to man the mind or thought of God!’²⁵¹

That women as well as men could show forth the mind of God, Butler based on the fact that at Pentecost the promise of the prophet Joel had been fulfilled: ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.’ ‘Upon the servants and the *hand-maidens* I will pour out my Spirit; and your sons and your *daughters* shall prophesy.’ Butler’s forth-telling of the mind of God in the context of campaigning against the double standard of sexual morality in the Victorian world demonstrates how she interpreted the Bible in an innovative and powerful manner as she collided with the culture of her day and as she lived out her public theology in prophetic ways. Butler wrote that one would never believe, from just looking at the church, that the promise of Joel had been fulfilled:

‘Is it possible that the Church has ever fully believed this, has ever truly heard or understood this mighty utterance from heaven, recorded... in the Hebrew scripture, and again at the great inauguration of the present Dispensation – a Dispensation of Life, Impartiality, Equality, and Justice, in which there is, or should be, “neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek?”²⁵²

Alison Milbank suggests that Butler found in the role of prophet a meaningful model because it was permitted to women by Scripture and ‘involved personal rather than institutional authority’.²⁵³ Butler makes much of the Scriptural basis for her authority as she repeatedly refers to the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy at the day of Pentecost. Not

²⁵¹ *Prophets and Prophetesses: Some Thoughts for the Present Times* (Newcastle, 1898), p.4

²⁵² *ibid* p.5

²⁵³ Alison Milbank, ‘Josephine Butler: Christianity, Feminism and Social Action’ in J. Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, Raphael Samul (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (Abingdon, 1987) pp.154-164, p.156

even the apostle Paul can deny woman's right to prophesy, else he would be denying Scripture, she states.²⁵⁴

In her 1890 tribute to Catharine Booth she states that

‘women have found a voice; women now preach (or prophecy); and God has set is seal upon their word and work. St. Paul's pronouncement must stand aside a little to be judged under the clearer light that is coming’.²⁵⁵

Butler's qualification of the word ‘preaching’, even in the context of writing about one who she believed manifestly did preach with great power and whose ministry was ‘attested by God’, is notable.

Eileen Yeo is right to emphasize that Josephine Butler ‘drew power from being consciously prophetic’.²⁵⁶ It was a role that, with strong biblical justification, she could encourage other women to take up. Furthermore, as Flammang suggests, it was a personal encouragement to Butler, and an endorsement of her ministry, that women began to participate in her campaign in large numbers.²⁵⁷ However, in addition to the role of a prophet being a meaningful and useful role for Butler, it was surely far more.

Butler believed that God had called her to be a prophet and that she was compelled to speak out: ‘I feel as if I must go out into the streets and cry *aloud* or my heart will break’.²⁵⁸ This was something she seems to have both welcomed and feared. According to Butler, the CD Acts were ‘the dreaded call which I had foreseen, to go forth and cry

²⁵⁴ *Prophets & Prophetesses* (1898), p.5

²⁵⁵ ‘Catherine Booth’, in *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 58 July 1 1890, pp.639-654, p.650

²⁵⁶ Eileen Janes Yeo (ed.), *Radical Femininity: Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester, 1998) p.137.

²⁵⁷ Lucretia Flammang, ‘And Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophecy: The Voice and Vision of Josephine Butler’ in J. Melnyk, (ed.), *Women's Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1998), pp.151-163, p.160

²⁵⁸ *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909), p.93

aloud! I hated the call, I hated the task'²⁵⁹ However, once she accepted the call and began the battle she asserts in an equally strong way that it was 'a place of free breathing compared to the oppression and the heart woe which went before'. It is important here to quote and analyse Butler's statement of what it was, why it was she had to 'cry aloud' in order to contextualise why she could breathe more freely when doing so.

'I saw this great social iniquity (based on the shameful inequality of judgement concerning sexual sin in man and woman), devastating the world, contentedly acquiesced in, no great revolt proclaimed against it, a dead silence reigning concerning it, a voice feebly raised perhaps now and again, but quickly rebuked and silenced.'²⁶⁰

When she took up her campaign it was the sexual double standard expressed through what was regarded as sexual sin, that she believed she was called to address – to cry aloud, to lead a revolt, to be the voice of the outcast.

It has been said that 'Only a silent woman presents no risk.'²⁶¹ A member of Parliament recognised the danger of women like Butler speaking out and Butler surely realised its power when he told her 'We know how to manage any other opposition in the House or in the country, but this is very awkward for us this revolt of the women. It is quite a new thing what are we to do with such an opposition as this?'²⁶² She entitled the section of her *Personal Reminiscences* in which she relates this 'The Conspiracy of Silence,' and as the voice of the outcast determined to break the silence.

²⁵⁹ 'Newspaper Biographies of Mrs. Butler & Press Notices of Her Death: The Tribune', *The Shield* New Series Vol.X:92 (Jan 1907), pp.2-16, p.5

²⁶⁰ Quoted in *The Shield*, 'Newspaper Biographies: The Christian' (1907) p.7

²⁶¹ Bach (1997) p.29

²⁶² *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.11

In expressing gratitude to God that she had been granted the ‘favour’ of becoming the ‘voice’ of the outcast, Butler clearly believed that God had called her to this role and had prepared her for it. What influenced her in this direction?

CHAPTER TWO

‘AM I NOT A WOMAN AND A SISTER?’

BUTLER’S ANTI-SLAVERY HERITAGE

Angelina Grimke (1805-1879), the American abolitionist and advocate of women’s rights famously wrote that ‘the investigation of the rights of the slave has led me to a better understanding of my own’.²⁶³ A very similar claim can be made for Josephine Butler, and this chapter will explore the impact of the campaign against slavery on the development of her thought and praxis. It will be argued that Butler’s anti-slavery heritage had a direct and profound impact on her recognition of the outcast and on becoming her voice, and on her reading of the Bible. The influence of John’s Grey’s anti-slavery principles and convictions on his daughter is clear from her own writings.²⁶⁴ The chapter will seek to build on and deepen what is already known about the nature of anti-slavery influence on her and to suggest a more detailed and nuanced understanding of some of the biblical interpretation involved.

Firstly, the influence from women – including women in her family – will be demonstrated; and secondly, attention will be drawn to the importance of written anti-slavery sources – notably, the poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier, and the slave narratives of the period – for the formation of her theological approach to the absolute equality of all people.

²⁶³ Angelina E. Grimke, *Letters to Catherine Beecher* (Boston, 1838), ‘Letter XII: Human Rights Not Founded on Sex’, pp.114-121, p.114

²⁶⁴ See *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (Edinburgh, 1869) especially pp.86-92; *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909) p.14

However, at the outset it is important to address, briefly, a statement about John Grey's relationship to the Clapham Sect which could be misleading.

John Grey and the Clapham Sect

Kathleen Heasman identifies John Grey as 'a member of the Clapham Sect'. Though what constituted membership is not defined, this classification needs to be treated with caution and could prove misleading. He was not a member in the sense of living in Clapham or frequently visiting the homes of other Claphamites. More important for his influence on Butler is the fact that he differed from Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect on some fundamental principles and some key legislative measures.²⁶⁵

Whilst E. M. Howse is right to imply that it would be showing complete disregard for the passage of time and the shifts of history to measure the Clapham Sect by the precepts of late Nineteenth century Christian Socialism, he nevertheless goes on to make the telling point that

'the Clapham circle... lent their powerful influence to the relentless policy of repression which for almost a generation ground down the poor in increasing misery, and which savagely persecuted persons with spirit enough to protest.'²⁶⁶

The ways in which she refers to this period of time and to the Acts of Parliament that Howse had in mind, make clear that both Josephine and John Grey would have been wholly and passionately opposed to Wilberforce's voting record. Wilberforce voted in favour of the Corn Law 'which made the hungry poor still hungrier.'²⁶⁷ John was firmly in favour of Free trade because he could see the hardship being caused to the poor who

²⁶⁵ K. Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action* (London, 1962), p.167.

²⁶⁶ E. M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom* (Toronto, 1952), p.117. See Howse, p.117f., for a more careful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the Clapham Sect's undoubted influence on the direction of reform; also Scotland, Nigel A. D., *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age 1789-1901* (Exeter, 2003)

²⁶⁷ Howse, p.117

could not afford bread. Furthermore, of complete anathema to John was Wilberforce's support of 'the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill' which John vocally opposed with the result that, as Josephine takes pride in revealing, his name was placed on a list of

'political seducers... denounced, in particular, for his mischievous habit of "haranguing mobs."'²⁶⁸

Crucially, writing his memoir in 1869, the year before she took up the cause of repeal, Butler stated that John viewed the possession of the right of Habeas Corpus, as constituting 'the distinction between the freeman and the slave.'²⁶⁹ His preface to this remark, 'be it remembered', would have been a reference to the fairly recent *Somerset* case (1772) which through an argument of Habeas Corpus had set the legal precedent that slaves could not be owned in England.²⁷⁰

Habeas Corpus was clearly extremely important to John and Josephine as a principle of English law. But its anti-slavery significance needs to be underlined. Even if the CD Acts had been solely the about the suspension of habeas corpus then surely Josephine would have campaigned.

²⁶⁸ *Memoir of John Grey*, p.59; it is not known whether Josephine knew that Lord Grey was the teller for the aye votes when the parliamentary vote on habeas corpus took place in 1679. Charles II, 1679: An Act for the better securing the Liberty of the Subject and for Prevention of Imprisonments beyond the Seas.', Statutes of the Realm: volume 5: 1628-80 (1819), pp. 935-38. Online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=47484>. (accessed 6/3/2007)

²⁶⁹ *John Grey* (1869) p.63. Butler must also have been aware of the contrasting ruling in the *Dred Scott v Sandford* case in 1857 whereby the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that those "whose ancestors were ... sold as slaves" were "beings of an inferior order" who were not included in the phrase "all men" in the U.S. Declaration of Independence and thus were not afforded any rights by the United States Constitution. See Library of Congress website: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/DredScott.html> (accessed 06/10/2013)

²⁷⁰ See Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London, 2011) p.125

From this brief sketch, it can be seen that to identify John Grey too readily with the Clapham circle apart from their anti-slavery activity and their support for the Bible society, would be a dangerous and misleading extrapolation.

The Impact of Women's Anti-Slavery

Claire Midgley's ground-breaking book drew attention to the previously unacknowledged importance of women for the success of the anti-slavery campaign. Her contrast of the official anti-slavery portrait with the true nature of ground roots anti-slavery activity is very telling. So, too, is the remark that George Thompson, the national anti-slavery activist made that women 'formed the cement of the whole antislavery building – without their aid we never should have been united.'²⁷¹

Midgley's work is equally important in demonstrating the importance of anti-slavery activity for women and for their subsequent realization of the need to campaign for equal rights with men. Interestingly for the concerns of this thesis, Christians from the beginning of the century through to the emancipation of the slaves disagreed on women's involvement in liberating the slave, and it is significant for Josephine Butler and her campaign that anti-slavery activity was thus a catalyst for exposing differing views on women's nature, sphere, rights and duties.²⁷²

So what influences did Josephine come under regarding women's involvement in anti-slavery activities? Loades makes the valid point that slavery was something 'of which Moravian missionaries had seen all too much', which makes her statement that

²⁷¹ Midgley (1992), p.44 citing letter from George Thomson to Anne Knight

²⁷² See e.g. Midgley (1992) p.166

Josephine's mother, Moravian-educated Hannah Annett, 'was, amongst other things, totally committed to the abolition of slavery,' seem a safe assumption.²⁷³

The influence of Josephine's grandmother, Mary Grey, in educating her children about the slave trade is attested by Josephine's citation from her paternal aunt, Mary Lundie Duncan.²⁷⁴ However, this aunt and John's other sister, Margaretta, must also have had a significant impact on Josephine, since research reveals that they, too, were actively involved in anti-slavery campaigning. Mary Lundie Duncan published a book in 1852 about her travels in the United States.²⁷⁵ Recounting an incident of racist bullying she had witnessed, Mary asked

'Is it true, that white children in virtue of a complexion, in the possession of which they have no merit, insult or injure children of another shade of color, for which they ought to have no disgrace? ...Is this a method in which to raise free, and generous, and just citizens?'²⁷⁶

Writing about an instance of adult mistreatment she warned 'O America! Country of freemen... [the] God of the Black man and the White is not afraid of judgment'.

It was presumably because of Mary's knowledge of the conditions of slavery that she 'quivered from head to foot' on hearing certain sounds from the yard.²⁷⁷ Similarly, on being told of the tears and convulsions produced in 'a black nursing mother' at household prayers by 'the plainest statement of gospel truth', she inwardly 'questioned what manner of nerve-shaking events ...or what known, and perhaps forced sins, might be then making conscience tremble.'²⁷⁸ Was Mary's account of what she saw in America one of the 'first sources' referred to by Josephine in her much quoted summary

²⁷³ Loades (2001) p.77

²⁷⁴ *John Grey* (1869) p.13

²⁷⁵ M. Lundie Duncan, *America as I Found It*, (New York, 1852)

²⁷⁶ *ibid* p.255

²⁷⁷ *ibid* p.269

²⁷⁸ *ibid* pp.255, 256, 263

of how her ‘feelings concerning injustice to women’ were ‘keenly... awakened’?²⁷⁹ Or was it Mary’s pre-existing knowledge from those ‘first sources’ that made her sensitive to the grim realities of female slavery and able to reinforce the point? Either way, Mary’s personal testimony would have had a profound effect on Josephine and clearly resonates with her statement of the impact on her of the

‘hideous wrong inflicted on Negro men and women. I say women, for I think their lot was particularly horrible, for they were almost invariably forced to minister to the worst passions of their masters, or be persecuted and die’.²⁸⁰

Mary’s belief in equality is clearly based on her Christian faith and she quotes approvingly the words used by Rev. Dr. M. Mason ‘If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.’ as he silenced critics in his congregation and welcomed Katy Fergusson (1779- 1854), who was born into slavery, into membership in his church.²⁸¹

John Grey’s other sister, Margaretta, described by her married name of Mrs. Henry Grey, was one of the signatories of The Stafford House Address of 1853, asking the women of America to support abolition. There was a backlash against aristocratic ladies forming a ‘petticoat parliament’ and Margaretta published a pamphlet in response to the criticism.²⁸²

As Margaretta made clear, she was not part of the discussions at Stafford House but signed the address when it came to Edinburgh, where she was a member of a very active women’s anti-slavery group²⁸³. The powerful rhetoric and skillful use of language that

²⁷⁹ *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909) p.14

²⁸⁰ *ibid.* p.14

²⁸¹ Duncan (1852) p.160. It should be noted that Mary suggests an autonomous black country as a solution to racial prejudice (p.281)

²⁸² ‘An Englishwoman’ [Mrs Henry Grey], *Remarks Occasioned by Strictures in The Courier and New York Enquirer of December 1852, Upon the Stafford House Address. In a Letter to a Friend in the United States* (London, 1853)

²⁸³ ‘An Englishwoman’ (1853), Statement following Title Page

she employs are striking and can be said to parallel that of her brother, John, who was according to Butler a noted orator.²⁸⁴ In the context of this thesis both her forceful style and the content of her argument are highly significant precursors of Butler's own. Margaretta's fundamental criticism of American society both Northern and Southern was,

‘You live in a land of slaves – in a community made up of two classes, to either of which it would seem to us the most awful calamity to belong.’²⁸⁵

She characterises slavery as anti-Christian²⁸⁶, and implies that, since Americans have the English Bible and English ‘Bible knowledge’, they should know better.²⁸⁷ In particular she rejects Harriet Beecher Stowe's claim that some people in Britain are living an existence that equates to slavery in one short sentence: ‘The idea is purely ridiculous’.²⁸⁸ Then she goes on to refute this suggestion in a point-by-point comparison of the rights of a slave and the rights of a British subject. She counterattacks by thundering against states placing a ban on teaching slaves to read, as she claims, ‘we are not afraid of knowledge’.²⁸⁹

Similarly significant for Butler's equation of the double standard with the oppression of slavery is Margaretta's argument that slavery involves a ‘brutish licentiousness’ in which illegitimate children are treated like the ‘offspring of lower animals’ and are sold or as she implies are used for further breeding.²⁹⁰ They are regarded as ‘beasts to be sent

²⁸⁴ See for example ‘An Englishwoman’ (1853) p.19; *Memoir of John Grey* (1869), pp.48, 144

²⁸⁵ ‘An Englishwoman’ (1853) p.25

²⁸⁶ *ibid* p.29

²⁸⁷ *ibid* p.20

²⁸⁸ *ibid* p.15

²⁸⁹ *ibid* p.13

²⁹⁰ *ibid* p.27

out to be sold, tortured... worked to death, or given up... to shame and pollution.²⁹¹

Like her sister Mary Lundie Duncan she asserts that surely a day of God's judgement will come saying: 'Will the Lord not visit for these things?'²⁹² She attempts to inspire the free white women to empathise with enslaved mothers who face the loss'' of their children.²⁹³

Margaretta expresses robustly republican views as she accepts that British, or as she says English, society is 'divided into classes...running to seed at both extremities', and states that pruning is needed to return the 'waste vigour into the central part'.²⁹⁴ She praises the founding fathers who left Europe for America when Europe was 'struggling with the ...perversion of institutions that seemed then to have nearly fulfilled their destiny and to be ready to pass away.'²⁹⁵ She argues that 'slavery and tyranny grow inseparably together' and that this is what overthrew

'the master-republics of the Old World, cheating them of the manly fortitude, the domestic virtue, the devoted patriotism, that are the very soul of republican government.'²⁹⁶

In arguing that a 'properly constituted commonwealth' is the way forward, Margaretta does not seem to be merely employing language designed to win the approval of her American audience. Rather she seems genuinely passionate about the concept of government designed to ensure the common good.²⁹⁷ She also, in a similar manner to Butler, argues for women being represented in Parliament as she refers dismissively to

²⁹¹ *ibid* p.27

²⁹² *ibid* p.27

²⁹³ *ibid* p.40. See *Woman's Work & Woman's Culture* (1869) p.xix, where Butler employs a similar technique to engender sympathy for outcast women and their 'disinherited' children.

²⁹⁴ 'An Englishwoman' (1853) p.5

²⁹⁵ *ibid* p.4

²⁹⁶ *ibid* p.27

²⁹⁷ *ibid* pp.8, 34

the failure of ‘male legislators’ to support causes where the ‘moral benefit takes precedence of the secular advantage’.²⁹⁸

There is one further point of significance to be mentioned here and that is Margareta’s analysis of the nature of liberty and the need for lone voices. Margareta drew a contrast between the concept of liberty in France and America, on the one hand, and Britain on the other. The liberty in France is ‘that of being of the reigning opinion’. She also describes it as ‘crying out in the voice of the multitude, having no toleration for a minority’.²⁹⁹ Margareta states that she is drawing her characterisation of French liberty from Madame Germaine de Staël (1766-1817) the writer and society hostess.³⁰⁰ In contrast to this, Butler will be seen in Chapter Seven to be describing herself as a solitary voice, crying not ‘in the voice of the multitude’ but ‘among the multitude’.³⁰¹ Her expression of a minority opinion accords with Margareta Grey’s characterisation of British society as a place where ‘truth and sound opinion often make progress slowly’, and where the ‘enlightened few, or the conscientiously faithful’ may lack support in Parliament but have the support of ‘popular opinion without’.³⁰²

In sentiments that must have been particularly resonant with Butler’s campaign, Margareta asks her ‘Christian brethren’ to explain why appeals to end slavery are met with a retort or silence on the issue. Although she is critical of ‘unimprovable church formalities’ she asserts that the British clergy know their Christian duty is not to quench

²⁹⁸ ‘An Englishwoman’ (1853) p.12. See too p.38 where Margareta argues that women still have the power to influence opinion.

²⁹⁹ *ibid* p.23

³⁰⁰ *ibid* p.23. The full name of de Staël is Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Baronne (baroness) de Staël-Holstein.

³⁰¹ *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* (Bristol, 1913)

³⁰² ‘An Englishwoman’ (1853) p.23

‘the voice of agitation and argument.’ God she asserts is on the side of those opposing slavery and it is ‘God not man who is to be feared, and sin that is to be shunned not trouble.’³⁰³ ‘What is needed she says is ‘a revival of the true Puritan and Republican virtue’.³⁰⁴

Margaretta has previously been recognised as an influence on Butler through Margaretta’s lament that women did not have more opportunities for worthwhile activities, and through her determination to witness an important debate in Parliament even though it meant disguising herself as a boy to gain entry.³⁰⁵ Butler describes her as having a strong ‘natural sense of injustice’ and ‘great natural eloquence’ that she wished to use.³⁰⁶ This brief analysis of her rhetoric has demonstrated that she must have been a powerful inspiration for Butler and a role model in taking the fight to the enemy and speaking out in causes in which she believed. It also demonstrates continuity between Butler and both aunts in asserting the biblical imperative of equality and firm opposition to the sexual double standard.

Though this was not the only address or appeal to be sent by a woman across the Atlantic during this period, Margaretta’s work must have been significant for Butler in modelling the ambition to gain trans-Atlantic support for reform, and years later she herself wrote an *Appeal* addressed to American women in which she expressed very harsh criticism of the aristocracy.³⁰⁷ Butler would also have been aware of the power of the Stafford House address resulting in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s widely publicised and

³⁰³ *ibid* pp.41, 6, 33

³⁰⁴ *ibid* p.37

³⁰⁵ *Memoir of John Grey* (1869) p.15. See too p.14-17. Margaretta refers to the importance of the Reform Bill on p.18 of her 1853 address. Jordan (2001) p.17

³⁰⁶ ‘An Englishwoman’ (1853) p.15

³⁰⁷ *Mrs. Butler’s Appeal to the Women of America. Addressed to the International Council of Women.* (New York, 1888)

influential reply some ten years later, arguing for support for the North in the American Civil War.³⁰⁸

Butler's remarks about the way she and George were ostracised for their pro-Northern stance as they were 'swimming against the tide' in Cheltenham must be seen against the background of Margaretta's address.³⁰⁹ Butler's harsh criticism of the aristocracy in her appeal to American women can be seen as a strategy to enlist republican sympathies, as can her references to 'veterans' in the battle against Parliament. It could also be seen as distancing herself from Lord Shaftesbury and from a gradualist approach to emancipation.

Female Anti-Slavery Support for Butler

Milbank is right to conclude from Butler's letters and the writings of her supporters 'that this Christian Feminist critique of the Acts was common to a group', and that 'Butler in her writings was addressing a real audience'.³¹⁰

Women's anti-slavery activity was particularly strong in Glasgow, Edinburgh and the North East of England, the area of Britain where Butler grew up and which formed the territory where her father, aunts and uncles were active in reform. This should be accorded more significance, both in terms of the personal influence on Butler from this sisterhood and in terms of the way the force of the Christian convictions of many of these abolitionists under-pinned her own arguments.³¹¹ Walkowitz, in her study of the Ladies' National Association (LNA) which co-ordinated the Repeal campaign,

³⁰⁸See Hedrick (1994) p.304f; Midgley (1992) p.180

³⁰⁹ *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892), p.141

³¹⁰ Milbank (1987), pp.154-164, p.154

³¹¹ See Duncan Rice, *The Scots' Abolitionists 1833-1861* (Louisiana, 1981) ch.6, for a discussion of the involvement of women who campaigned alongside Butler, including Mary Estlin, Eliza Wigham and Elizabeth Pease, and Harriet Beecher Stowe in Britain.

identified 'ten of its thirty-three leaders as having been involved in anti-slavery'.³¹² Midgley's careful tracing of the careers of leading female abolitionists and exploration of their trans-Atlantic links enables the picture of Butler's inter-connectedness with the female anti-slavery network to be seen.³¹³ Milbank, following Walkowitz, identifies three 'main kinds' of 'organized opposition to the Acts' and places Butler in a group of 'middle- and upper-class feminists, particularly of Quaker origin', who 'campaign on moral, constitutional and feminist grounds'.³¹⁴ Butler was quite clear about the debt she owed to the Quakers for their support in her repeal campaign, since 'the earliest public meetings addressed by women on this question were held in Quaker meeting houses', whilst 'most persons were scandalised by women's action in those early days of our conflict'.³¹⁵ Butler also emphasised that her mother-in-law, Sarah Butler, who had been raised as a Quaker, was 'the first in the family to write us words of sympathy concerning that part of our work which is misunderstood by so many', and left a legacy towards Butler's campaign in her will.³¹⁶

There is more scope for exploring the mutual influence of those who subsequently campaigned alongside Butler in terms of their 'Christian Feminist critique', including Mary Estlin, Eliza Wigham and Elizabeth Pease Nichol (1807-97). Butler made a telling point when she said of Estlin that she 'had imbibed the true Abolitionist, Anti-slavery spirit from her youth'.³¹⁷ Butler and Estlin were not the only women of whom this could be said: Butler and Pease Nichol 'were involved in both anti-slavery and all the major

³¹² Walkowitz (1980) p.

³¹³ Midgley (1992) ch 6, 'The Transatlantic Sisterhood', p.119ff

³¹⁴ Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.154

³¹⁵ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.228f.

³¹⁶ Jordan (2001) p.113; see too Jordan p.48 for reference to Catherine Butler, George's sister, who married Bishop Bowen of Sierra Leone

³¹⁷ 'In Memoriam Miss M. A. Estlin', *The Shield*, December 1902.

feminist campaigns of the period.³¹⁸ When Josephine went to Plymouth, she gained at least four more supporters when it was realised that she was ‘the daughter of their father’s friend’ John Grey’.³¹⁹ Josephine inherited from her father not only his anti-slavery views but the support of his network of associates in the anti-slavery cause.

As Butler makes clear, not all the women who supported her cause were women of faith, nevertheless, as Frances Power Cobbe’s remark attests, a woman could regularly engage in theological arguments even if she described herself as ‘a heretic of the deepest dye’.³²⁰ Christian faith and interpretation of the Bible was an important thread in this network. In words very similar to Butler’s assessment of her own father, Pease said her father ‘had an instinctive abhorrence of tyranny and oppression in every shape, whether displayed towards an individual or a race.’³²¹

According to Anna Stoddart, the first contact Pease had with ‘large political activities’ was full of lessons to ‘give food to the hungry and... rescue the oppressed’.³²² This is strikingly similar to Butler’s statement of John Grey’s love of quoting Isaiah – both in giving a wide definition of oppression and in rooting action to alleviate it in a Biblical imperative.

John Grey and Joseph Pease must have been connected through their presence in London at key times in the abolition campaign in order to petition Members of

³¹⁸ Midgley (1992) p.173

³¹⁹ Walkowitz (1980) p. 164. A. R. C. Bolton, *The Six Brides of Dilston* (Bognor Regis, 1984), p.85. Rachel Bragg was the mother of Josephine’s friends, the Priestman sisters.

³²⁰ Edith C. Rickards, *Felicia Skene of Oxford: A Memoir* (London, 1902), pp.74, 75; Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Priestman. (Fragment of letter dated before Jan 24th 1883)

³²¹ Anna M. Stoddart, *Elizabeth Pease Nichol* (London, 1899), p.16. Cf. *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (1869) p.47

³²² Stoddart (1899) p.16

Parliament, and through the visits and correspondence of men like Clarkson of whom Elizabeth Pease said she sought his opinion on ‘almost every move in the Anti-Slavery Campaign’.³²³ Indeed, given the relatively close proximity of the homes of the Greys and the Peases, it would seem highly likely that the men might have visited or met up locally in the cause of reform. Certainly, later Butler records staying with Elizabeth’s brother, Thomas, at his family home and bequeaths a portrait of herself to him.

A highly significant influence on Butler from another member of this reformist network came from ‘dear old Mrs. Cropper’, who told Butler that ‘there were disinherited hearts waiting for the overflow of motherly love’, and asked her to help in the home she had set up for thirty rescued girls. Mrs. Cropper was of the family of James Cropper, the abolitionist and benefactor who was the person to whom Zachary Macaulay had expressed the view that ladies’ associations ‘seem to form now one mainstay of our hopes’, and agreed with him that they ‘ought to be strenuously pushed in every direction’, thus illustrating that both were convinced of the political power of women in aiding the anti-slavery cause.³²⁴

‘Mrs. Cropper’ was, probably, the wife of John Cropper, Ann, who is recorded as holding a bible class every Sunday in the home they had set up for rescued girls. The friendship created between the Croppers and the Grey family by anti-slavery activities continued as Josephine’s older sister, Tully, settled in Liverpool with her husband, so that Hatty’s diary records a family visit to the Croppers’ house. Butler viewed the slave and the outcast as one and it is interesting to see this link at the outset of her work in

³²³ Stoddart (1899) p.31

³²⁴ *In Memoriam, Harriet Meuricoffre* (London, 1901), pp.179-180; Midgley (1992) p.49

Liverpool, with a woman and a family who worked on behalf of both the enslaved and the outcast.

Duncan Rice, in referring to the fact that Elizabeth Pease Nichol moved to Edinburgh, when widowed, to live with Eliza Wigham, makes the crucial point that the ‘Wighams... moved in a cohesive world of reformers.’³²⁵ As this brief exploration has shown, Butler was also firmly part of that cohesive world of reformers, both through the reform activities of her parents’ and aunts’ generation, and through her own involvement. She did not only, in McCulloch’s words, take her father’s ‘hatred of slavery to the streets of Britain’, she also followed in female footsteps as she opposed herself to every cause that she saw as a threat to Habeas corpus, religious toleration or the equality of all.

The Influence of Anti-Slavery Literature

The second aspect of anti-slavery influence on Butler that will be explored here is abolitionist literature. Significantly *In Memoriam, Harriet Meuricoffre* (London, 1901) provides important evidence of a clear link between Butler and anti-slavery literature in her formative years – literature which not only drew attention to the fate of the female slaves but also lauded the leadership of women as well as men in the anti-slavery campaign, literature which, a careful study of her own writings shows to have been of lasting importance in the way she framed her own campaign and role.

(i) John Greenleaf Whittier

Anti-slavery poetry is revealed to be a very significant influence at work shaping Josephine’s anti-slavery thinking and her theological understanding of how the God she

³²⁵ Rice (1981) p.44

believed in opposed oppression. Hatty credits Josephine with introducing her to John Greenleaf Whittier's poetry, saying that he 'has become a friend to me.'³²⁶ Josephine's own love of Whittier's poems is significant since he was described by Frederick Douglass as 'the slave's poet', and had a close connection with William Garrison. Whittier was frequently published in *The Liberator*, which Douglass said 'every week I made master of its contents'³²⁷

Whittier, who said that he was prouder to have his name "appended to the Anti-Slavery Declaration of 1833 than on the title page of any book",³²⁸ was well known to a British audience through *The Liberator*, where his work was published with introductions such as "Our gifted brother has again seized the great trumpet of Liberty, and sounded a blast that shall ring to the Rocky Mountains."³²⁹ He was also prominent because he 'sang 'a spirited ode' he had written specially at the opening of the World Anti-Slavery Congress in London in 1840.³³⁰

It is not the purpose of this thesis to evaluate the quality of Whittier's poetry, but the suggestion of Keller that Whittier has been a poet 'to love not to belabor', admired for the strength of his principles rather than the strength of his poetry may well be appropriate. However, what his poetry does contain is theological facts, Biblical truths

³²⁶ *In Memoriam* (1901) p.208

³²⁷ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and my Freedom* (New York, 1855) p.180, 356. See Midgley (1992) pp.31-35 for a discussion of anti-slavery poetry by women.

³²⁸ Williams, Cecil B., 'Whittier's Relation to Garrison and the "Liberator"', *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Jun., 1952), pp. 248-255 p.248 note 3

³²⁹ Williams (1952), pp. 248-255 p.249 note 7

³³⁰ See S. Hobhouse *Joseph Sturge, His Life and Work*, (London,1919) p.93.

applied to slavery and anti-slavery; these would have been a powerful influence on his audience including Butler and do not merely appeal to the emotions.³³¹

Josephine quotes frequently from poems in her published works without attributing them and research shows that many of these quotations are from Whittier; indeed there are more quotations from Whittier than from any other single source except the Bible. Out of the ten chapters of her *Personal Reminiscences*, seven of them are prefaced by quotations from Whittier.³³² Furthermore, the title of the campaigning journal ‘designed to encourage general interest in liberty issues’ which Butler edited and wrote from 1898 onwards, ‘*The Stormbell*’, is taken from a Whittier poem and Butler includes a stanza as the heading of each edition:

*The storm-bell rings, the trumpet blows;
I know the word and countersign;
Wherever Freedom's vanguard goes,
Where stand or fall her friends or foes,
I know the place that should be mine*³³³

Given the prominence of quotations from Whittier in Butler’s published works it is necessary next to turn to a consideration of some of his key themes and to show how they were of significance for Butler. The stanza Butler chose for *The Storm-Bell* is a quotation which is typical of Whittier’s main theme of personal involvement in fighting for ‘Freedom’, indeed, of being in the ‘vanguard’ of such a struggle. Butler’s application of this to her own cause is clear in her choice of this to be the title and

³³¹ K. Keller, ‘John Greenleaf Whittier’ in R. A. Ree & E. N. Harbert, *Fifteen American Authors Before 1900: Bibliographic Essays on Research and Criticism* (Wisconsin, 1971) pp. 357-386, p.357

³³² See *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), chapters 1,3,4,5,6,7,10

³³³ ‘The Summons’ in John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, (Boston, 1894) p. 332

opening words of her journal, and arguably, she is stating not just her own stand on behalf of freedom, but challenging her readers to join her.

Similarly, Whittier's poem about William Lloyd Garrison, lauding his leadership of the anti-slavery movement, describes him as

*CHAMPION of those who groan beneath
Oppression's iron hand*³³⁴

Whittier goes on to delineate the cost to Garrison of taking this unpopular stance, and to make clear that Garrison's task of speaking 'in a slumbering nation's ear' against tyranny is a holy cause and God will supply the strength to see it through. Butler's admiration for Garrison was demonstrated in the testimonial that she raised for him when he was paying a visit to Liverpool, and he in return had great respect for Josephine and George.³³⁵ As Pivar aptly comments Garrison immediately recognized in the new reform "the old ring of uncompromising warfare against sin". Garrison opposed the licensing of 'sin', arguing that "if one sin can be licensed, why not another?"³³⁶ Josephine's close identification of her cause with Garrison's is shown by her use of the word abolition to describe her campaign, and by the fact that 'her watchword', as Jordan calls it, was taken directly from Garrison – 'I will be harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – and *I will be heard*'.³³⁷

³³⁴ 'To William Lloyd Garrison', Whittier (1894) p.262

³³⁵ See *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) pp.265-267

³³⁶ David J. Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900* (Connecticut, 1973) p.67

³³⁷ Jordan (2001) p.115f cites Butler's use of the Garrison quotation from her speech at an LNA meeting at the Priory Rooms, Birmingham, on the morning of Friday, 27 January 1871, reprinted in the *Shield*, 11 February 1871, p.385. Jordan notes that Butler 'slightly misquotes Garrison's 'Salutatory Address' in the *Liberator*, 1 January 1831 but actually slightly misquotes it herself. It is: 'I will be as harsh as truth, and as

Whittier's poetry would seem to have been part of Josephine's desire to consciously emulate Garrison's leadership in freedom's cause, not only against slavery, but against other forms of oppression, including the sexual double standard. Furthermore, female role models in the struggle for liberty are also memorialised and extolled by Whittier. When Pennsylvania Hall, Philadelphia was built so "that the citizens of Philadelphia should possess a room wherein the principles of Liberty, and Equality of Civil Rights, could be freely discussed, and the evils of slavery fearlessly portrayed", Whittier's eponymous poem was read at the dedication and, importantly, includes the words

*How the high errand quickened woman's soul,
And touched her lip as with a living coal*³³⁸

In a bold assertion, Whittier applies Isaiah's anointing as a prophet to 'woman'. The reference to 'woman's soul' may refer more widely to other women but certainly refers to Angelina Grimke, who was to make a notable speech in the Hall a few days later – notable because controversial given her gender, and as such destined to become a landmark in abolitionist and civil rights' history. It was notable, also, since it proved to be one of the few speeches to be made there before it was burned down, destroying the office of the Pennsylvania Freeman of which Whittier was the editor.³³⁹

The irony of the target of the Philadelphian mob's anger being abolitionists was well-expressed by the subsequent verdict of the British abolitionist, Joseph Sturge:

'there is no city in the known world, where dislike amounting to hatred of the coloured population prevails more than in the city of "brotherly love."³⁴⁰

uncompromising as justice... I am in earnest -- I will not equivocate -- I will not excuse -- I will not retreat a single inch -- AND I WILL BE HEARD'.

³³⁸ 'Pennsylvania Hall' in Whittier (1894) p.281

³³⁹ Gerda Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina* (Oxford, 1998) p.248

³⁴⁰ Sturge, quoted in S. Hobhouse, *Joseph Sturge, His Life and Work*, (London, 1919) pp.98, 99.

Though far from alone in this respect, Philadelphia's belief that women should keep out of the public sphere was made clear in an 1850 article: "A woman is a nobody... [a] wife is everything...and a mother is, next to God all powerful."³⁴¹ In contrast, Whittier's lines seem to be justifying women's public speaking as part of a prophetic and righteous ministry in the service of God; just as Isaiah's lips were anointed with a 'living coal' so too the lips of a woman have been anointed to speak God's message at His commission.

The subsequent swift and violent opposition not only to abolition, but to women speaking on public platforms, took the form of the torching of the Hall. This was not known to Whittier at the time of composition but remains juxtaposed with Whittier's lofty statement of the historical importance of the building as well as his personal loss in the cause of freedom of speech and the press. Butler would have been aware of the significance of this poem and it fits with her belief that women as well as men were called to prophesy.

Moving from the white abolitionist women in Whittier's poems to the plight of the enslaved women, the particular oppression of female slaves in sexual abuse and in the separation of mothers and children was often referred to in anti-slavery poetry of the time. Whittier's 'The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to her Daughters Sold into Southern Bondage' makes the case in its title alone. This poem includes the mother's reference to her daughter becoming 'at night the spoiler's prey', and her wish that her children/daughters 'had earlier died / Sleeping calmly, side by side,' since then they would have been 'Where the tyrant's power is o'er / And the fetter galls no more.'³⁴²

³⁴¹ *The Public Ledger* cited by Lerner (1998) p.3

³⁴² 'The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to her Daughters Sold into Southern Bondage' in Whittier (1894) p.279. See too Whittier, 'Toussaint L'Ouverture' p. 262

Another aspect of slavery that Butler detested was that of slavery being carried out in the name of Christianity, with the result that a Christian might be oppressing a fellow Christian who was enslaved, or causing the slave to be repulsed by the religion of Christ which could justify such oppression. She wrote that slaves

‘have been subjected to every bodily suffering, & far worse than that, have been driven to reject Jesus, because He was their Masters’ God, that is to say their Masters professed to be Christians thro’ all their cruelty & tyranny, & so the faith of the poor negroes was shaken & destroyed.’³⁴³

Whittier’s poem ‘The Christian Slave’ picks up this theme and suggests that ‘Moslems’ and Tunisians have given freedom to the slave, but as for the Christian Church –

*Its rites will only swell his market price,
And rivet on his chain .*³⁴⁴

The way he develops this theme is by taking it in a theological direction as he identifies the slave as made in the image of God. ‘Who bids for God’s own image?’ is the pithy and quotable way he expresses this thought. The theological concept of all humanity being made in God’s image was a fundamental principle for Butler. So Butler tells the outcast woman she is like a coin trampled deep in the mire, but that she still bears the King’s image. She is ‘the ‘Lost Coin’ that should be sought for diligently’.

Building on this theme of the divine image, the poet then utilises another Biblical quotation which is foundational for Butler’s theological understanding of Christ’s solidarity with the slave and the outcast:

*Hast Thou not said that whatsoe'er is done
Unto Thy weakest and Thy humblest one
Is even done to Thee?*

³⁴³ ‘Diary of Josephine Butler, containing “Private Thoughts”’ (1856-1865), Entry: April 1865

³⁴⁴ ‘The Christian Slave’ in Whittier (1894) p.289

Chapter Two, below, will explore how George Butler developed this theme, and Chapter Four will discuss Josephine's identification with the oppressed to the point where she claims that dishonour done to them is 'dishonour done to me'.

Whittier's intensification of the identification between Christ and the slave through referencing Christ's Passion and suggesting that Christ suffers in the person of the slave would have been a powerful argument for Butler who similarly argued that Christ suffered in the person of the outcast.

In contrast to this, and employing Butler's chosen title 'outcast', Whittier makes clear that the praise of the Church is reserved for those who teach the slave only obedience and

*No dangerous tale of Him who came to save
The outcast and the poor*³⁴⁵

Criticism of the Church continues in Whittier's 'The Pastoral Letter', which, as the introduction to the poem makes clear, refers to opposition by Congregational ministers to Angelina and Sarah Grimke's public speaking activities which 'threaten the female character with widespread and permanent injury.' The suppression of dissent and denial of freedom of speech for laymen and women are likened to past times, when church and state worked together against 'Papist, witch, and Quaker', so that

*A Papist's ears the pillory bore —
The gallows-rope, a Quaker woman!*

Whittier's argument that the 'priestly power' of 'parish Popes' is once more being exercised 'the mind to fetter!', raises issues close to Butler's heart: the religious liberty of the individual, freedom of speech, and the ministry of women. Those who refuse to

³⁴⁵ 'The Christian Slave' in Whittier (1894) p.289

listen to a woman speaking God's truth are in fact 'striving with God and the ark of His salvation'.

Using apocalyptic language, Whittier refers to 'an earthquake voice of power' and God's liberative acts as

*chains are breaking, and a door
Is opening for the souls in prison!*³⁴⁶

Turning, in the same poem, to the Grimke sisters, who must have acted as role models for Butler, he lauds their self-denial in their ordeal and then references three strong female characters from the Old Testament whose qualities he asks God to give the Grimkes. Though Whittier does not amplify his allusions, Butler's pre-existing knowledge of Scripture, or the curiosity aroused by his words would have led her to several associations. 'Miriam's voice,' was used to rebuke Moses and to celebrate triumph over oppression in the freedom of the Israelite slaves. 'Judith's hand,' was used in fearlessly attacking the man threatening her; and 'Deborah's song' recorded the success of her leadership in ensuring the Israelites' freedom when a man was too weak to take to the field alone. All of these would have been appealing role models for a woman faced with leading a national campaign against what she regarded as the oppression of women, and faced with men who refused to support her. Furthermore, the biblical setting of Miriam, Judith and Deborah adds the element that they were regarded as being inspired or assisted by God in their endeavors, however blood-thirsty, and all

³⁴⁶ 'The Pastoral Letter', Whittier (1894) p.277

three were rather different role models to the dutiful daughters and obedient wives of Scripture perhaps more usually commended to Victorian women.³⁴⁷

Thus it can be readily seen how Butler's core beliefs are to be found in the poems of Whittier – beliefs in a Saviour who identifies with the 'weakest' and the 'humblest', who suffers because what is done to these is done to Him and 'who came to save the outcast and the poor'. Equally importantly, these poems are critical of the Church for being part of the mechanism of oppression rather than proclaiming the liberation which is in Christ. Butler would have approved of Whittier's defence of freedom of speech and his opposition to church authorities trying to silence the voice of women speaking against slavery. Their example set a precedent for her to cry aloud against oppression declaring God's liberty to the imprisoned.

(ii) Slave Narratives

In examining the influence of slavery and anti-slavery on Butler, it is important to consider not just the speeches and literature of white abolitionists but the words of those who had been enslaved. Writing of her father's commitment to anti-slavery activity and principles, and of the influences upon her as she was growing up, she stated that

'at that time sad and tragical recitals came to us from first sources of the hideous wrong inflicted on Negro men and women.'³⁴⁸

The critical words here are 'from first sources'. What did Butler mean by this? She went on to tell the story of a 'negro woman who had four sons' all by her master, and three of whom had been sold themselves as slaves, having no contact with their mother. Her master in a fit of rage shot her only remaining son, 'her treasure', and in her unbearable

³⁴⁷ These biblical characters are discussed in W. T. Stead, 'Mrs. Josephine Butler's Bible' in *The Review of Reviews* (Dec. 1894), pp.570-571, which will be explored further in Chapter Eight below.

grief she crawled under a wood shed, praying for death, but also for forgiveness for her master. She died praying to Butler's God and hers. Butler recalled

'how these things combined to break my young heart, and how keenly they awakened my feelings concerning injustice to women.'³⁴⁹

How did she come across this story? It is quite possible, given her father's interests and connections, that she heard ex-slaves speak. But certainly she must have read some slave narratives, since firsthand accounts by former slaves were widely available.

Describing the years 1836-1865 as the 'heyday' of the genre, Yuval Taylor says that 'over eighty slave narratives were published' during this period.³⁵⁰ Robin Blackburn suggests that the 'anti-slavery of this period acquired a greater moral radicalism by new openness [sic] to the experience of the slave'.³⁵¹ Taylor identifies one of the roles of slave narratives as being 'to impart religious inspiration' and a common theme is the conversion of the slave.³⁵²

As a member of a committed, literate, abolitionist family which clearly did not hide the realities of slavery from its children, Butler must have read slave narratives and been

³⁴⁸ *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909), p.14

³⁴⁹ *ibid* p.14

³⁵⁰ Y. Taylor, *I Was Born a Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives: 1* (Chicago, 1999) p.xvi. Taylor's Introduction discusses whether accounts are fictionalised or rewritten by an amanuensis who was usually white. It also explores how representative of slave experience in general the protagonists and their narratives are. See also Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*, (London, 1831, Reprinted 2004) edited by Sarah Salih, pp.xvf, for a discussion of how far the narratives are the voice of the slaves whose names they bear and how far they mimic their masters' voices. For the purposes of this thesis it will be assumed that Butler would have taken the slave narratives to be an accurate representation. .

³⁵¹ Robin Blackburn *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* , (London, 1988) p.442

³⁵² Y. Taylor (1999), Introduction. See too Kerry Sinanan, 'The Slave Narrative and the Literature of Abolition' in A. Fisch (ed.) *The Cambridge Handbook to The African American Slave Narrative* (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 61-77, for discussion of how slave narratives paralleled other conversion narratives of the day.

influenced by them – though which ones she read it is, at present, not possible to say. However, a notable example was *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831), which, according to Robin Blackburn, ‘directly nourished the radicalisation of British abolitionism’, and went through three editions in its first year of publication. Perhaps, because it was the story of a female enslaved in colonial slavery, it was ‘recommended for purchase ...to every lady present’ at the annual meeting of the influential Birmingham Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves.³⁵³

Given the high profile nature of Mary Prince’s narrative, it seems reasonable to suggest that Butler would have read it, and it will serve as the first of three examples of the genre and its potential effect on Butler.³⁵⁴ Reading the graphic account of the death of Prince’s fellow slave, Hetty, following a miscarriage brought on by the whipping she received from her master – who was probably the father of the child, and who was angry with her because a cow had escaped – it is easy to understand why Blackburn describes *Mary Prince* as one of the ‘most affecting narratives’, and to see how reading propelled the ladies of Birmingham to lead the way in moving for immediate abolition. It is also clear why Austin Steward (1857) says of his narrative of his own slave experience:

‘The author... sends out this history – presenting as it were his *own body*, with the marks and scars of the tender mercies of slave drivers upon it.’³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*, (London, 1988) p.442

³⁵⁴ The narrative of Harriet Jacobs will be examined in Chapter Eight in the context of Butler’s exposition of the Biblical passages on Hagar.

³⁵⁵ Quoted in Y. Taylor (1999) p.xviii. S. Northrup, *Narratives of Solomon Northrup, Twelve Years a Slave* (Auburn NY: 1853), pp.50-53, 81-82, 84-88, also provides examples of the ill-treatment of female slaves including the story of a mother sold away from her children.

Mary Prince also charts Mary's movement towards embracing the Christian faith, and, significantly for Butler, Mary's troubled relationship to Anglicanism. Mary's lack of religious liberty, in having to get permission from her master to attend church, is contrasted with the behaviour of Methodists and Moravians who helped her with literacy, and her welcome into communion, both of which would have echoed Grey family values.³⁵⁶

A spiritual biography that Butler wrote of a prostitute and infanticide she had known reveals a direct influence from the life experience of a real slave mother and a second fictional slave mother.³⁵⁷ Again Butler quotes poetry, this time by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in a poem that describes the tragic story of a slave mother killing her newborn child and burying the corpse in the woods. This was the reality of slavery and Butler is merely being accurate when she references it in the context of an infanticide she had known. Indeed it should be pointed out that in her choice of the pseudonym 'Margaret' for the woman in question, Butler must have been influenced by the true and deeply disturbing story of Margaret Garner, which 'was told in churches and rented theatres by sympathetic preachers and outraged abolitionists.'³⁵⁸

The trial of Garner in 1856, for killing her two year old daughter with a knife rather than let her be taken back into slavery, attracted vast crowds, as lawyers from the Cincinnati side of the Ohio river, where slavery had ended, argued that she should be tried for murder as a free woman, while lawyers for her master, whose estate was across the river

³⁵⁶ *Mary Prince* (1831) p.xii. See Butler's *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* pp.117,118

³⁵⁷ 'The Dark Side of English Life. Illustrated by Series of True Stories', *Methodist Protest*, Jan-May 1877

³⁵⁸ Steven Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South* (New York, 1998), p.5

in Kentucky, argued that she was his property and should be returned to him. Steven Weisenburger sums up the way this case polarised public opinion since for abolitionists:

‘no case more incisively revealed the pathology of slavery, and no deeds better symbolized the slave’s tragic heroism.’ (Yet for pro-slavery supporters) ‘her deeds demonstrated that slaves were subhuman,... so Margaret’s child-murder proved the bond servant’s need for Southern slavery’s kindly paternal authority.’³⁵⁹

Garner’s trial was widely reported in both the United States and Britain as highly significant in exposing irreconcilable differences over whether states should comply with the Fugitive slave law and return escaped slaves to their masters, and both sides ‘saw in their differences over Margaret Garner’s case the roots of civil war.’³⁶⁰ Equally important for Butler would have been the reference to the sexual oppression of Margaret, made in court by the anti-slavery campaigner, Lucy Stone (1818-1893):

‘The faded faces of the Negro children tell too plainly to what degradation the female slaves submit. Rather than give her daughter to that life, she killed it’.

This was in stark contrast to the silence usually observed on a man’s sexual license – ‘a silence which is in fact a permanent endorsement of injustice,’ as Butler judged it.³⁶¹

Stone’s next words were equally controversial:

‘If in her deep maternal love she felt the impulse to send her child back to God, to save it from coming woe, who shall say she had no right not to do so?’

Proof of the way this story captured the imagination of contemporary anti-slavery supporters, including artists, is found in Garner becoming known as ‘The Modern Medea’ and being portrayed in paintings and poetry.³⁶²

³⁵⁹ Weisenburger (1998) p.6. The case was complex with Ohio as a free state arguing it was murder because in this way they could challenge both the idea that Margaret was a chattel and challenge the Fugitive Slave Law. As a slaveholding state, Kentucky argued that Garner’s crime was theft of slave property not murder because Garner was a chattel and should be returned to her owner.

³⁶⁰ Weisenburger (1998) p.6

³⁶¹ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.ix

When Butler wrote of her time in Oxford, that incidents occurred ‘which brought their contribution to the lessons then sinking into our hearts’,³⁶³ it seems reasonable to deduce that she was referring to the sexual double standard as it operated in Oxford. However, she may have included the Garner case as one of those ‘incidents’. The rebellion of an enslaved mother, driven to murder her child, could have influenced the Butlers’ invitation to a freed infanticide to be employed in their Oxford home, since the invitation – though difficult to date precisely – took place at some time between 1852 and 1856. Clearly, Butler knew more than one such woman, but Garner’s case was peculiarly graphic in its exposure of the sexual oppression of the mother and the consequences of her fear of its repetition in her daughter’s experience; and even if Garner’s case came too late to influence the Butlers’ actions in Oxford, she may have helped give rise to Butler’s later assertion that

‘When the hue and cry after the murderer of an infant comes my way, I look on; nor will I, by word or act, aid the discovery of the guilty mother’.³⁶⁴

Jordan’s comment, that it ‘would have been unthinkable for Josephine to have uttered such opinions in company in the Oxford of the 1850s’, carries weight.³⁶⁵ However, because of the Garner case, this clearly was a topic being discussed at that time on both sides of the Atlantic, and, as an ardent abolitionist, she would have found it very

³⁶² Paintings of Margaret Garner include Thomas Satterwhite Noble's 1867 painting, *The Modern Medea*. Garner's life story was the basis of Frances Harper's 1859 poem ‘Slave Mother: A Tale of Ohio’. Her story was the inspiration for the novel *Beloved* (1987) by Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison.

³⁶³ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.ix

³⁶⁴ *National League Journal*, 1 June 1877, p.14, cited in Jordan (2001) p.308 n.47. On infanticide see Loades (2001) p.97 for the 1868 case of Hester Vaughan. See DNB entry for Elizabeth Butchill c.1758-1780, executed in Cambridge 17th March 1780 for child murder.

³⁶⁵ Jordan (2001) p.308 n.47

difficult to remain silent. Silent or not, in the atmosphere of the Garner debate, the Butlers' own actions must have spoken volumes.

Conclusion

The cumulative effect of listening to Clarkson's description of the horrors of the 'Middle passage' whilst at her father and mother's knee at such a tender age,³⁶⁶ linked indelibly in Josephine's remembered experience of her father with the words of the prophet Isaiah and her father's visible and visceral reaction to oppression, was undoubtedly the most dramatic and powerful influence that her father had on her.

Butler was inspired by the poems of Whittier and used his words to frame her own. A crucial part of the argument here has been that Whittier's influence on Butler was not to create a sentimental empathy with the plight of the slave, but, rather, to underline the biblical and theological case against slavery, and for the fundamental equality of all people as made in the image of God and for whom Christ suffered. The ringing apocalyptic language that Whittier employed to call others to action in the cause of liberty was taken up by Butler in her own campaign on behalf of the outcast.

Whittier – and Butler in quoting him – was making a deeply theological point in saying that lovers of liberty should answer the call,

*When for the sighing of the poor,
And for the needy, God hath risen,
And chains are breaking, and a door
Is opening for the souls in prison!*³⁶⁷

It has been argued that the slave narratives must have been at least a part of what Butler meant by 'tragical accounts' from 'first sources', and that the religious dimensions of

³⁶⁶ *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (Edinburgh, 1869) p.13

³⁶⁷ 'The Pastoral Letter' in Whittier (1894), p.276

slave experience were an important part of these narratives . It has also been argued that, alongside these, and arguably, of greater significance in moulding Butler's theological critique of slavery and oppression, was the poetry of Whittier.

As an abolitionist and reformer, Josephine was following in the female footsteps of her aunts and grandmother, and through her family was firmly part of a network of reformers seeking to apply the teachings of Christ to both domestic and foreign issues. This network was made up largely of Non-Conformists and included very influential women who had insisted on maintaining the independence of their women's organisations over against being mere auxiliaries of men's organisations.

Convinced of the absolute importance of *Habeas Corpus*, not least because of its anti-slavery significance, she might well have agreed with Howse that,

'had Wilberforce and his "party of no-party men" set their faces against other injustices a different and happier chapter might have been written in English history.'³⁶⁸

When it came to the Contagious Diseases Acts, Josephine clearly did not feel, to echo her father's words, that 'circumstances' necessitated suspension of *habeas corpus*, and therefore she, too, argued that ministers were using it to 'serve their own base purposes.'³⁶⁹

George Butler's comment on the strengths of the British Parliamentary system is apposite here:

'We have, thank God, a constitutional Sovereign' and a constitutional Parliament these days, not a "would-be despotic monarch" who has political rights wrested by an armed aristocracy.'³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Ernest Marshall Howse, *Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom* (Toronto, 1952), p.118

³⁶⁹ *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (1869), p.62

³⁷⁰ 'George Butler in Birmingham', *The Shield* , No.11 May 16th 1870, pp.88-89, p.88f

Yet Josephine Butler firmly asserted that ‘I *am* republican.’³⁷¹ In this respect, she may have moved beyond her father, or perhaps he lived in an age and held a post where it was necessary to be more circumspect about such remarks. She elsewhere spoke about the residual power of the aristocracy as the ‘trail of the serpent’, and, in a phrase which Jordan rightly says is ‘evocative of the English Revolution,’³⁷² Butler declared that

‘English women will be found ready again and again to agitate, to give men no repose, to turn the world upside down if need be, until impurity and injustice are expelled from our laws’.³⁷³

Jordan might also have pointed out that the use of the expression ‘turning the world upside down’, both during the 17th Century and by Butler, must surely have been a conscious echo of Acts 17:6, as Christ’s early followers perturbed the authorities, both religious and political, by their actions and speeches. This serves to emphasise that Butler’s foundation for her political views was a theological one. Using another phrase reminiscent of the 17th Century radicals, Butler also referred to the ‘typical acts of Christ... a dangerous leveller’³⁷⁴ which will be explored in Chapter Five, and as if to underline her leveller tendencies, when considering an audience with the Pope she remarked – ‘I like nice old gentlemen but I never want to kneel to one’.³⁷⁵

All of these themes from her childhood – the Lordship of God, solidarity with all humanity, active opposition to tyranny, and a willingness to sacrifice for a cause, are summed up in Whittier’s words:

³⁷¹ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Mary Priestman, 11 June 1886 FL.

³⁷² Jordan (2001) p.126

³⁷³ *The Constitution Violated* (1871), Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.211-303, p.281

³⁷⁴ *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (1869), pp.lvii-lviii

³⁷⁵ Quoted in A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (London, 1954) p.156

*Long as one human heart shall swell
Beneath the tyrant's rod.*

*Then onward with a martyr's zeal;
And wait thy sure reward
When man to man no more shall kneel,
And God alone be Lord!*³⁷⁶

³⁷⁶ 'To William Lloyd Garrison' in Whittier (1894) See too *John Grey* (1869) p.146

CHAPTER THREE

A CLASS OF SINNERS

Introduction

Of the years that Josephine spent as a young bride in Oxford (1852-1857), immersed as she was in the life of the University through George's work as Examiner of Schools, Jane Jordan concludes that it is in Butler's

‘response to what was less appealing about Oxford that we see signs of the attitudes and convictions which drove the much more public life that was to be hers.’³⁷⁷

Certain incidents and remarks of Butler's from this time have been documented in support of this, such as her appeal to Benjamin Jowett for help to make a male academic see his responsibility for the servant he had made pregnant and thrown out, together with Jowett's consequent elusive reply – ‘It is dangerous to rouse sleeping lions’ – and Josephine's Blakean response, unvoiced at the time, that ‘The harlot's curse from street to street shall become old England's winding sheet’; the Butlers' bold step of inviting a freed infanticide to take up employment in their Oxford home; and Josephine's rescue of a circus girl, ‘whose acrobatic performances were the most innocent part of her role’, and following the girl's recapture, Josephine's anguish in hearing ‘the cry of a woman's aspiring to heaven and pulled back down to earth’.³⁷⁸

Mathers' choice of the word ‘revolted’³⁷⁹ to describe Butler's reaction to the collusion, through silence, of academics with the operation of the sexual double standard, sums up

³⁷⁷ Jordan (2001) p.43

³⁷⁸ Jordan (2001) p.45f; *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909), p.33; *Recollection of George Butler* (1892) p.98; Hester Jones, ‘Josephine Butler “The Still Voice of Silence”: Prophets and Prostitutes’ in Milbank (2007), pp.69-88, p.79

³⁷⁹ Helen Mathers, ‘The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler 1828-1906’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2 (April 2001), pp 282-312, p.298

well the detestation Butler felt for these features of Oxford life and the powerful impact they had on her. Butler's account of the discussion that took place in her drawing room of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel, *Ruth*, expresses this forcefully:

'Every instinct of womanhood within me was already in revolt against certain accepted theories in Society, and I suffered as only God and the faithful companion of my life could ever know.'³⁸⁰

It's clear that the world she and George moved in during their years in Oxford made a profound impression on her in terms of her campaign for education and employment for women, and on behalf of outcasts.

This chapter will re-examine the importance of her time in Oxford particularly with respect to the influence on her biblical interpretation and public theology. It will be argued that Butler's Oxford experience must be ranked alongside her anti-slavery heritage as formative for her identification as the voice of the outcast, and crucial for her reading of the Bible. Three aspects of the Oxford influence on Josephine Butler will be explored. Firstly, the possible influence of Felicia Skene, who contemporaneously devoted herself to work amongst the city's prostitutes, will be explored. Skene's publications provide evidence of the extent of prostitution in Oxford and of a female Christian response to it. Secondly, analysis of an article by Arthur Engel provides further evidence of the particular profile of prostitution in Oxford and the university's role in regulating it. Thirdly, the influence of her husband, George Butler, will be examined, through his own, previously ignored, biblical interpretation as seen in his sermons and publications, and through his involvement in the circles that were shaping the art and literature of the day. Josephine's statements about her time in Oxford will be revisited in the light of all

³⁸⁰ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.96

this, and suggestions made as to the supreme importance of these years on fundamental convictions and theological outlook.

The Nature of Oxford Society

Josephine stated that Oxford society, pleasant though it was in many ways, ‘had its shadow side’. This was ‘a society of celibates’ where students were not permitted to marry and fellows were not permitted to marry without losing their fellowship, and for her, it was a place with ‘little or no leaven of family life’.³⁸¹ It was clearly her expectation that the unmarried men should remain celibate, especially since many were ordained or heading towards being in holy orders. In this context, Josephine’s biblical allusion to the need for leaven did not imply a need to lighten the serious tone of Oxford society but, rather, to her perception that a purifying moral influence was needed.

Oxford was a small, originally walled, town and the colleges were surrounded by places where all sorts of people made a living and resided. Poverty and squalor and the city jail were only a few minutes’ walk from the colleges, and in living for what was probably the first time in a town, Butler must have been very aware of the contrasts with her father’s benevolent emphasis on well-ordered estates.

In a vivid image taken from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Rev. Algernon Barrington-Simeon called St. Thomas’s parish ‘a sort of Lazarus, full of sores, lying at the very gates of wealthy Christ Church, ‘neglected, poor, forsaken, the haunt of thieves and harlots’, abounding in houses of ill-fame and in every kind of wickedness.’³⁸² In Sir Henry Acland’s *Memoir of the Cholera at Oxford* (1854), the black spots, showing the streets invaded by cholera, were more conspicuous in that district than in any other part

³⁸¹ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.94

³⁸² Algernon Barrington-Simeon, *A Short Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Chamberlain*, (Oxford, 1892), p.100

of the city. He stated that the only place where mortality was higher was the County gaol, which was housed in the castle not far away.³⁸³ During the cholera epidemic, Acland, who was the professor of medicine, was assisted by George Butler and others. Josephine related this, thus providing a rare reference to her undoubted personal knowledge of this side of Oxford life.³⁸⁴

Skene's *Hidden Depths*

Another person who had helped Acland by superintending the nursing of cholera victims during the outbreaks in 1849 and 1854, was Felicia Skene (1821-1899). Skene, the daughter of a diplomat who moved in court circles, provides an interesting parallel to Butler and a possible influence. Skene became a resident of Oxford following a cosmopolitan upbringing which had made her aware of less privileged existence, including slavery. She saw black slaves and veiled white women, and witnessed women being rejected by a potential purchaser.³⁸⁵ Skene was a much published author with magazine articles, several factual books and some fiction to her credit. In Oxford she became a dedicated visitor to the County Gaol with a particular interest in the women imprisoned for prostitution, and became the first woman in England to be recognised as an official prison visitor-some twenty years after she had started her work there.

When Skene's novel, *Hidden Depths*, was published in 1866, it proved popular and controversial, since two parallel stories of a servant girl's path into prostitution, and the attempted seduction of a middleclass girl, are set against the background of university life in the fictional 'Greyburgh', which was taken by her contemporary audience to be

³⁸³ Cited in Edith C. Rickards, *Felicia Skene of Oxford: A Memoir* (London, 1902), p.100.

³⁸⁴ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.108; Rickards (1902), p.102.

³⁸⁵ Rickards (1902), pp.60-61

Oxford.³⁸⁶ Lillian Nayder in her introduction to *Hidden Depths*, argues that it is ‘sensation with a purpose’ since it combines Skene’s Tractarian beliefs with the popular genre of sensation fiction.³⁸⁷ In discussing the negative reaction to the novel’s suggestion that prostitutes were victims of seduction, Nayder points to the review in the *Athenaeum* ‘which took particular offense at the claim that prostitution was a problem that concerned Oxford University (‘of all places in the world!’)’ as the writer in the *Athenaeum* put it’.³⁸⁸

What this demonstrates is that, although the suggestion that prostitution was a problem for Oxford University could be treated as ridiculous in the press, and the themes of the novel could be classified as sensational, nevertheless, Butler was not the only woman aware of the realities of the double standard in Oxford ‘of all places’! In common with Butler, Skene was aware of the ‘shadow side’ of Oxford and perhaps connected the existence of the ‘Lazarus’ of St. Thomas’s (the parish where she worshipped) with the ‘Dives’ of Christchurch and the university in general.³⁸⁹ Skene described the plight of fallen women as society’s ‘blackest curse’ and like Butler, condemned the ‘veil of mock prudery’ behind which society sought to hide this curse as thousands of wretched women ‘drift year after year into the abyss’.³⁹⁰ Society allowed this ‘because their sin was unfit to be named in... polite society’. But Skene, like the later Butler, drew attention to contemporary hypocrisy when she accused society of having no scruples

³⁸⁶ For a discussion of this novel and its reception see Lillian Nayder, ‘Introduction to *Hidden Depths*’ in Andrew Maunder (ed.), *Varieties of Women's Sensation Fiction, 1855-1890. Volume 4: Sensation with a Purpose* (London, 2004) pp. vii-xxii.

³⁸⁷ Nayder (2004) pp. vii-xxii.

³⁸⁸ *ibid* p.xvii

³⁸⁹ Rickards (1902) p.81

³⁹⁰ Felicia Skene, *Penitentiaries and Reformatories* (Edinburgh, 1865. Reprinted Gloucester, 2009), p.4

about ‘receiving with open arms the very men for whom they sinned’. Her use of ‘for’ rather than ‘with’ whom they sinned is telling, since it shows where she believed the blame to lie.³⁹¹

Skene was resident in Oxford during the Butlers’ time there, but only began her work with prostitutes some years after the Butlers had left, but before Josephine had begun her campaigns. The diary of Josephine’s sister, Hatty, shows the social contact of the Butler and Skene families, including Hatty’s friendship with Zoe Skene, who lived with her aunt Felicia and her grandmother.³⁹² Whether or not Skene and Butler ever communicated with each other about prostitution, or whether Skene supported Butler’s campaigns, she is an apposite example of a woman with similar concerns to Butler, who was a voice for the outcast but, perhaps, in more traditionally female roles, as a writer and prison visitor. Whilst Butler refers sarcastically to Jowett’s refusal to let her address his ‘sweet undergraduates’,³⁹³ it is interesting that he consulted Skene when, as a member of the senate, he had the task of dealing with matters of student discipline. Skene demurred at Jowett’s suggestion that she had told him what to do, though he did acquiesce, which is an interesting contrast with his refusal to follow Butler’s earlier lead. It is also a contrast with the mature Butler who was only too ready to instruct Oxford academics.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Skene (1895) p.4

³⁹² *Diary of Harriet Grey* (Undated typescript, Northumberland Record Office), pp.29, 33, 37, 39.

³⁹³ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Mr Wilson, March 25th 1873, WL

³⁹⁴ Rickards (1902) p.149. See *Josephine Butler’s Account of her Tour of Oxford, 4 November 1881*, in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp.171-175, p.173ff

The University and Prostitution in Oxford

The very existence of prostitution would have ‘revolted’ Butler, but there are additional aspects of prostitution in Oxford that would have further clashed with things she believed to be true. These are highlighted in Arthur Engel’s study of prostitution in 19th century Oxford.³⁹⁵ Through analysing police and university records Engel demonstrates the particular profile of prostitution in the city, and what the primary sources reveal about the prostitutes and the university men – both students and those charged with the regulation of the student body.

Engel’s opening quotation from *Tom Brown at Oxford* is apt:

‘A young fellow must sow his wild oats, and Oxford seems a place specially set apart by Providence for that operation’.³⁹⁶

Engel’s assertion that the prostitutes ‘were not the dismissed servants or tempted barmaids of popular legend’, begs the question of whether their route into prostitution has been documented adequately. However, it seems likely that, as he says, prostitutes were drawn to Oxford by the ‘unique opportunities’ of the relative wealth of university men.³⁹⁷

Whilst recognising the difficulty of gaining an accurate measure of the exact volume of prostitution, the evidence remains that there was a considerable prostitute population in Oxford and the surrounding towns supported by the academic population. The word ‘academic’ is used advisedly here since, despite the risks, it seems entirely probable that the prostitutes’ clientele included members of the university other than students. This is an idea that Engel does not raise, but his silence on this matter could be taken to suggest

³⁹⁵ Arthur J. Engel, “‘Immoral Intentions’: The University of Oxford and the Problem of Prostitution’ in *Victorian Studies*, vol. 23 (1979) pp.79-108

³⁹⁶ Engel (1979) p.79

³⁹⁷ *ibid* p.86

an assumption that the college fellows and tutors were unanimously ranged against prostitution, both in theory and in practice. This is despite the persuasive case that he makes for the reluctance of academics to punish students for consorting with prostitutes, and the discrepancy between the number of prostitutes who were jailed and the paucity of students disciplined. Engel suggests several compelling reasons for this, including the potential for students to bribe police officers, the distaste that academics felt over having to take the word of a police officer against that of 'a gentleman', and the propensity for the university men charged with enforcing discipline to accept any excuse put forward by the student rather than admit the student's guilt. An instance that he cites of a student pleading that he was engaged in rescue work – and getting off with a fine – makes the point.³⁹⁸

The university's role in dealing with prostitution is of interest in a consideration of the possible effects on Butler of her time in Oxford. The university, predicting a consequent increase in prostitution, argued, successfully, that Oxford should be exempt from a liberalisation of the law on common prostitution in 1824, and agreed to share the cost of policing.³⁹⁹ Butler would have known that the university was responsible for all policing in the town between the hours of 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. and was therefore significantly responsible for 'the number of prostitutes being imprisoned' and the 'extraordinary infrequency of punishment of undergraduates'.⁴⁰⁰

What did Josephine Butler make of all this? Although no extant record remains in which she discusses the question of prostitution in Oxford, there are several reasons for concluding that she knew it was part of 'the shadow side' of Oxford life. Firstly, George

³⁹⁸ Engel (1979) p.98

³⁹⁹ *ibid* p.80

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid* p.94

had been an undergraduate himself and was not naïve about student life, and he and Josephine clearly discussed sexual behaviour including homosexuality and prostitution.⁴⁰¹ Secondly, for a time the Butlers lived on the High, only a few doors away from Carfax, which was one of the two known pick up points in Oxford. The records consulted by Engel show prostitutes being apprehended on the High.⁴⁰² Thirdly, Oxford was a small place, and the Butlers were not living at a remote distance from the colleges. An observer counted a hundred prostitutes one evening in the environs of the university.⁴⁰³ Fourthly, the work that George and Felicia Skene and others carried out during the cholera epidemic took them into areas of the town where, as is clear from Barrington-Simeon's account of St. Thomas' parish as 'the haunt of thieves and harlots', prostitutes were known to be resident.⁴⁰⁴

Assuming that, just like Skene, Josephine Butler was only too aware of the prostitution and the university's role in regulating the activities of its male celibate community, certain conclusions can be drawn about her reactions. That the university regarded the women as snares, felt that the 'innocent' men needed protecting, and that the women were the target of the policing and imprisonment, must have exacerbated and embodied all that she detested about the sexual double standard. This is not to suggest that prostitution a stone's throw away formed any part of the discussion when the male academics were gathered in the Butlers' drawing room in the evenings. Nevertheless, when topics such as the novel, *Ruth*, were discussed it is easy to see how Josephine

⁴⁰¹ Letter from Josephine Butler to Geoffrey Faber (no date), cited in Faber, Geoffrey, *Jowett. A Portrait with Background* (London, 1957) p.92

⁴⁰² Engel (1979) p.90 f/n 23

⁴⁰³ *ibid* p.84

⁴⁰⁴ Barrington-Simeon (1892), p.100

must have reacted. Her approach to Jowett, asking for his help in making an academic see his accountability for throwing out a servant that he had made pregnant,⁴⁰⁵ and the welcome shown to the infanticide taken into the Butler home,⁴⁰⁶ have to be seen, not as Josephine's response to isolated incidents but as a reaction to the much more pervasive hypocrisy of the university community.

As a context in which to develop a 'counter-cultural' and subversive interpretation of Scripture with regard to the outcast, it would be difficult to think of a more striking setting than Oxford. In the midst of a supposedly 'male celibate society' – the majority of whom were in holy orders or seriously thinking about it – the discovery of the prostitute population, and the prevailing attitude to 'sowing wild oats', must have focused Josephine's mind on this issue in a peculiarly powerful way.

Two other aspects of Butler's later published views may be traceable to the influence of her time in Oxford – her aversion to 'government by police', and her angry attacks on the 'upper classes' for what she regarded as their morally lax, ill-treatment of working men and women.⁴⁰⁷ Butler consistently stated her opposition to government by police and consistently argued that citizens should govern themselves, exercise moral judgment and self-control and that no amount of legislation would curb immoral behaviour.⁴⁰⁸ With regard to rescue or preventative work, she consistently argued that volunteers were superior to paid employees.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.96

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid* p. 97

⁴⁰⁷ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Harriet Meuricoffre and Fanny Smyttan, c. early June 1872, in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2 pp. 366-371, p.370

⁴⁰⁸ See *Government by Police* (London, 1879), Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp. 71-111

⁴⁰⁹ See Jane Jordan, 'General Introduction' to Jordan and Sharp, vol.1 pp.1-30, p.7

In holding the upper classes responsible for the legislation supporting State regulated prostitution, Butler knew there was a continuum whereby the men of Oxford and Cambridge became the clergy, bishops and archbishops, the elected members of parliament and the Lords. Butler's strong class association between the exploited and the exploiter, the honest working man and the immoral aristocracy, may not have begun in Oxford, but it may well have been strengthened there and taken on a personal aspect, as she mixed socially with those who were to go on to rule Britain. She certainly expressed her opposition to this class divide forcefully subsequently:

'The upper classes in Parliament desire & are resolved to obtain & keep a system of legal harlotry superintended by Government & paid for out of the taxes paid by the people.'⁴¹⁰

George's Biblical Interpretation

Josephine claimed in her letter to Benjamin Jowett that she had addressed herself

'to God Himself, hoping... [for] some direct teaching... which could be a safe guide through time into Eternity.'⁴¹¹

But was this the only source of teaching for her? Her husband, George Butler, was a clergyman for thirty five years, and the preservation of his sermons and prayers in the family archive surely attests their importance for Josephine.⁴¹² They are a source worth

⁴¹⁰ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Harriet Meuricoffre and Fanny Smyttan, c. early June 1872, in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp. 366-371, p. 370

⁴¹¹ Copy of a letter to Mr. Jowett from Mrs. J. Butler. (No date) p. 2, WL

⁴¹² For references to his preaching activities, see, e.g. 'Private Record', a spiritual and daily diary kept by Josephine Butler (1874-1879). Northumberland Record Office, ZBU/E/3/A/6, entry: 14th Sept. 1874, and *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), pp. 262 & 247. It must be noted too that George wrote many prayers designed for family use. In the Butler Collection at the Northumberland Record Office there is a hand-written series of his prayers based on the Psalms with one prayer based on each Psalm. Whilst it is to be expected that these prayers as much as his sermons give an insight into his approach to Scripture, they have not formed part of the research for this present work.

studying alongside George's letters and speeches to ascertain how far the themes and passages he addressed overlapped with those that concerned Josephine.⁴¹³

George's extant sermons from the Butlers' time in Oxford are the most interesting in showing, at this very early stage, the shared views of husband and wife regarding the nature of the gospel. George preached for six months at Dartmouth Place Chapel in London in 1857, and, conventionally enough, dedicated his book of published sermons from this time to the Rev. Cowley who had made it possible for George to occupy the Chapel pulpit.⁴¹⁴ The remainder of the dedication is much more significant as George writes that Cowley has made it possible for him to 'PREACH THE GOSPEL FOR SIX MONTHS, TO RICH AND POOR'. George's understanding of 'the Gospel of Christ', as expressed in this volume, included a clear declaration that the gospel must be preached to the poor, whether they be literally impoverished or spiritually poor.

In line with Josephine's later description of Christ as a 'dangerous leveller',⁴¹⁵ George said that Christ was 'no proud Pharisee, no haughty Rabbi, but meek and lowly in heart,' and one whom 'the common people heard ...gladly', for Christ 'taught them how they might be saved in a way they could comprehend.' Noting that 'Jesus chose for his companions, for the witnesses of his miracles, poor fishermen of the Lake of Galilee', George drives home his message that Christianity is not the unique possession of the wealthy acolyte or the Oxbridge theologian by saying that this religion requires no

⁴¹³ Jordan discusses George's address at the opening of the Industrial Home in Liverpool. See Jordan, (2001) p.77; also 'Josephine Butler and the Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes' in Milbank (2007), pp. 12-34, p.26. Order of Service, Revd George Butler, 'Prayers at the Opening of the Industrial Home', n.d. [Good Friday 1867] LUL, JB 1/1 1905/04/00.

⁴¹⁴ *The Gospel Preached to the Poor a Sign of Christ's Presence on Earth: Sermons preached in 1857 in Dartmouth Place Chapel, Blackheath* (London, 1858)

⁴¹⁵ *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (London, 1869), p.lviii

‘costly sacrifices’ and that no ‘extent of human learning is made a condition of acceptance’. Thus in vivid language George would seem to be at pains to distance himself from any suggestion that a true understanding of the ‘good news’ Jesus proclaimed can only be attained by the scholar or ‘haughty’ teacher. On the contrary, George declares that the ‘religion of Christ is pre-eminently the poor man’s religion’.⁴¹⁶ Of similar resonance with Butler’s campaigns are George’s words about the responsibility of Parliament for spiritual leadership in the nation. He ponders what would happen if a messenger from God were sent to Parliament asking ‘What are the proofs of the Lord’s presence in this land?’ Could the ‘representatives of this country’, the ‘peers spiritual and temporal answer, ‘The poor have the Gospel preached unto them’?⁴¹⁷

George’s expression of the way of salvation in these sermons was a traditionally evangelical one, as he told his audience to have faith ‘in a crucified and risen Saviour’; in ‘virtue of this, you will be admitted into the heavenly city’. He also upheld the divinity of Christ, saying that the miracles of Jesus were one of the signs to John the Baptist’s disciples that the Messiah had arrived. In urging his hearers and readers to embrace the Gospel, he shows that he believed that anyone can find assurance of Christ’s acceptance. They should pray without ceasing until they know that assurance.⁴¹⁸

Preaching in Northumberland the week after John Grey’s funeral, George’s words that John would rejoice in the spread of ‘a Christian spirit of toleration joined with Christian

⁴¹⁶ *The Gospel Preached to the Poor* (1858) p.8. George applies ‘common people heard her gladly’ to Josephine in a speech in Birmingham at the beginning of her campaign. See ‘George Butler in Birmingham’, *The Shield*, No.11 May 16th 1870, pp.88-89, p.88

⁴¹⁷ *The Gospel Preached to the Poor* (1858) pp.8,11

⁴¹⁸ *ibid* pp. 21 & 22

zeal,' seem particularly apt as a measure of how John's family wished him to be remembered; they also sum up an important aspect of the Christian life which Josephine and George together aspired to emulate in their non-judgmental and non-sectarian approach to all they encountered – an approach that was not shaped by apathy to the issues concerned but by zeal for a greater 'spiritual harvest' in the future.⁴¹⁹

George's *Sketch of Recent Literature on the Life of Jesus Christ* responded to some contemporary works that had questioned the reliability of the gospels as an historical record and cast doubt on the divinity of Christ. George, made clear that he believed that Scripture attests that Jesus is Son of God as well as Son of Man, and criticised the approach of the French scholar Ernst Renan:

'If it is but a matter of private judgment what we are to receive from the Gospels and what to reject, then why is M. Renan to become my teacher?'⁴²⁰

George's conservative view of Scripture is further attested in his affirmation of the accounts of the miraculous in Scripture, including the resurrection of Jesus. In his *Lectures on St. John's Gospel* he specifically refers to Scripture as the source of revelation when he asks that God may give 'us grace to receive Jesus as He is revealed to us in Scripture, as the Way the Truth and the Life'.⁴²¹

Whilst preaching on the text 'What think ye of Christ?' George makes clear that belief in Christ must lead to praxis: it is 'not enough' for people 'to know Him as an historical

⁴¹⁹ George Butler, *What is Your Life? A Sermon preached at the Parish Church of Corbridge–On–Tyne on the Sunday next but one after the interment of John Grey, Esq., formerly of Dilston, who died on January 22nd, 1868* (Liverpool, 1868), p.18

⁴²⁰ George Butler, *Sketch of Recent Literature on the Life of Jesus Christ* (1854) [Hand-written notes at the Northumberland Records Office], p.10

⁴²¹ George Butler, *Lectures on St. John's Gospel* (Undated) [Hand-written manuscript in Northumberland Records Office], p.3

person' since 'He exercises no attractive power in their affections, no guiding influence in their lives.'⁴²²

It is in turning specifically to the fate of the outcast, that George's preaching reveals that his attitude to this group of people parallels that of Josephine. Interestingly, for the later rescue work he and Josephine engaged in, George likens the despair of a person cast out by God to that of someone who is 'excluded or shut out, during darkness of night, and severity of the cold' (Matt.viii.12). In contrast to this he juxtaposes the acceptance of Christ: 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out'. In defining those he is referring to as poor in spirit, who need the gospel preaching to them, George declares them to be, 'humble souls', those who throw themselves as suppliants at the feet of Jesus.'⁴²³ This would include, by implication, the penitent 'woman of the city who was a sinner', of Luke 9, who was Josephine's 'keynote to which the world needs to be tuned'.⁴²⁴

Thus, the sermons so far examined show George using as positive examples women from the gospels, in the persons of Mary of Bethany and 'the woman of the city who was a sinner', whom he clearly views as one accepted by Christ. However, two further sermons of George's are even more notable, since their themes and exegesis mirror so exactly Josephine's arguments about outcast women.⁴²⁵ In *The Love of Christ*, his

⁴²² George Butler, *What Think Ye of Christ? Matt xxii.42 A Sermon for Christmas, Liverpool College 1876* (1876) [Hand-written manuscript in Northumberland Records Office], pp.13 & 14

⁴²³ George Butler, *The Gospel Preached to the Poor* (1858) pp.19, 22, &, p.5

⁴²⁴ 'The Lovers of the Lost', in Jordan & Sharp, vol 1, pp. 93-120, p.96

⁴²⁵ George Butler, *The Love of Christ the Christian's Motive for Acts of Benevolence, Matt xxv.40 Preached in aid of the friends of the District Visiting Society Dartmouth Chapel, Blackheath Sept.27.1857* (1857) [Hand-written manuscript in Northumberland Records Office]; and George Butler, *'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'*.

sermon on Matthew 25 – the story of the sheep and the goats – George includes an anecdote about ‘a poor woman, one of the outcasts of society, more by compulsion, perhaps, than by wilful error,’ who fails to gain admittance to a refuge. He says that

‘The cry of the wretched outcast – “For Christ’s sake, take me in” was heard in Heaven’, and in hell: as evidence of ‘the deep sleep in which so many of us lie’.⁴²⁶

In the other sermon – *Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself* – George says that

‘the parable of the Good Samaritan shews us... that the gospel requires us not to pick and choose our neighbours; but to embrace... all who come near us, and with whom we have any dealings.’⁴²⁷

George here expounds a key idea for Josephine, and, in an identical manner to her, prioritises a Christological focus as he argues that Jesus demonstrated how his followers should behave. Quoting the command of Jesus to love one’s neighbour, George goes on to ask:

‘What, even though he be inferior in gifts, lower in station, less esteemed by the world? Yes! Even though he be one of society’s outcasts, inasmuch as Jesus loves him, and gave Himself for him, thou, too, shalt love him’.⁴²⁸

Having named ‘the heartless seducer’ as one of those whom the Christian should not welcome or regard as a fellow member of the Church, George moves on to raise the question of what should be the Christian response to the one woman who has been seduced. The significance of George’s next words, which could have been spoken by Josephine, cannot be exaggerated and are worth quoting at length:

‘But turn not away from such as seek to return into the paths of virtue. Drive not the outcast to despair. Shut not the door of thy heart against an erring sister: that

Leviticus 19.18 and Matt.22.37. Preached Dartmouth Place Chapel... Sept 6 1857 (Undated) [Hand-written notes lodged at Northumberland Records Office].

⁴²⁶ *The Love of Christ*, pp.20 & 21. See Levite’s Concubine writings for JB’s use of ‘we have slept too long’; see *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (London, 1883) p.15 for ‘tried the power of Jesus name’ which George also refers to in this sermon

⁴²⁷ *Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour* (1857) p.65

⁴²⁸ *ibid* p.69

will not commend thy spotless purity to him who conversed with the woman at the well of Sychar: who said of another grievous offender – He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her – who allowed his feet to be bathed and his body to be anointed against his burial by one who was a Sinner. [sic] Not so, Christian women: that is not the way to break the bands of wickedness, and let the oppressed go free'.⁴²⁹

Quite remarkably, George names all three women in the gospels who were identified as 'women of the city who are sinners' – the woman at the well (John 4), the woman caught in adultery (John 8), and Mary Magdalene (Luke 9). Here George prefigures Josephine's argument in both *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (1869) and in one of her first campaigning pamphlets, *The Lovers of the Lost* (1870), that, since the model for Christian behaviour is Jesus, then his treatment of the outcast woman must be implemented by the 'followers of Jesus' as they open 'a way for... erring sisters to return to the paths of peace', not by 'coldly saying 'She is a sinner.' Notably George calls them 'sisters' and juxtaposes this with the term he refutes – 'sinners'.⁴³⁰

Thus, George's sermons make clear that in the 1850s, in the early days of their married life, he was arguing that Jesus was the example Christians should follow when deciding whom to welcome, and that by following Christ's example, outcasts were to be included and seducers were not. George refers to narratives where Jesus is taking the side of women who were regarded as sinners by the religious people of His day, and by His example and words challenges the moral superiority of those who were shunning these women. By suggesting to Josephine that they write to the chaplain of Newgate gaol and offer employment to the infanticide, George was putting this principle into practice. His

⁴²⁹ *Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour* (1857) pp.71, 72

⁴³⁰ *ibid* p.73

praxis has often been quoted, but his sermons – preaching to others to do likewise – have not.⁴³¹

Who Influenced Whom?

So the crucial question of influence arises: did Josephine get all of these ideas from George? Or did Josephine influence George to think like this? Did they both get their ideas from a third party? Or did they arrive at them together through shared Bible study?

It is not known how often Josephine heard her husband preach, nor whether she read his sermons and discussed them with him. However, against the background of debate that Josephine had grown up with in the Grey family, and given her critique of the preaching in her local Anglican church, it is hard to imagine that she never expressed opinions on George's sermons. They clearly did discuss matters of faith and theology together.⁴³² In her correspondence with George, and in her recollected conversations, they frequently quoted Scripture to each other. It would not be surprising to find that, in her regular discussions of Scripture with George in Oxford, they had made a particular study of passages concerned with sexual morality and the treatment of women. George's sermons show that Josephine may well have developed clear biblical arguments on behalf of the outcast that she was only able to express publicly at a later date.

Mathers characterises George as Broad Church and certainly not 'Oxford Movement', and suggests that Josephine 'probably had an emotional need to emphasise the more

⁴³¹ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.97. See Jordan (2001) p.46, Loades (2001) p.108

⁴³² *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.102

Evangelical aspects of her husband's faith'.⁴³³ However, from the evidence of his sermons and his survey of biblical criticism, George could lay claim to emphasising 'the more Evangelical aspects of ...faith' himself, even in the very early years of their marriage.

How far their ideas were generated jointly or how far particular ideas can be said to have originated with one or the other is an interesting question. A look at George's sermons has shown themes that were also fundamental to Josephine's view of Scripture, perhaps most distinctively, her Christocentric approach to Christian ethics, and her conviction that a way had to be made to welcome back the 'outcast', however much that flew in the face of Victorian respectability. Both of them had a clear understanding that theology was to be practical and lived out in daily life. It was not just something to be researched in the Bodleian library and proposed for discussion in the University Sermon.

Conclusion on the Influence of Oxford on Butler

Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840-1932) who became Principal of Lady Margaret Hall, said that her eyes were opened to the shadow side of Oxford by what she learned from Felicia Skene:

'Ever since then Oxford has appeared to me in a sort of double aspect, the bright, gay, clever, and on the whole, good and well-meaning society which forms its upper surface; and the dark, sad, sinful, sometimes thoughtless, sometimes ignorant, but very often deliberately evil, under-current of human life.'⁴³⁴

⁴³³ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), pp.294, 295

⁴³⁴ Quoted in Rickards (1902), p.136f

Butler described this period of her life in Oxford as ‘the seedtime’ of which her later work was ‘a kind of harvest’.⁴³⁵ No wonder Butler regarded the double standard as the poison in the roots that needed tackling if anything else was to be achieved. Her deep antipathy towards the privileged taking advantage of women must surely go back to this time in Oxford. Jordan raises the question of whether Butler ‘might have drawn inspiration’ from Felicia Skene, and carefully demonstrates the parallels which undoubtedly exist between the approach of Butler and Skene to the outcast women, as Skene, too, focused on ‘love not judgement, and sought to show solidarity with fallen women, rather than the distance promoted by the CPA’.

However, her assertion that Butler must have got this from Skene is surely overstating the case, even though Jordan perhaps qualifies it by saying ‘which one *feels* [italics mine], must have been taken directly from Skene’.⁴³⁶ As this chapter demonstrates, the Butlers were already preaching and practising the showing of love to outcasts in Oxford before Skene began her work in the jail, and Josephine had stated that her impulse was to go to Newgate jail and tell the infanticide ‘of the God... who cared for her’.⁴³⁷ George’s preaching surely suggests that the inspiration for Josephine’s ‘guiding principle’ could have been straight from the shared understanding she had with him of the love of God as expressed in Jesus’ treatment of Magdalenes and prodigals.

Josephine stated that,

⁴³⁵ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Her Niece Edith Leupold, 8th March 1867, in Jordan & Sharp, vol.1, pp.82-88, p.83

⁴³⁶ Jordan (2007), pp. 12-34, p.24. See pp.19-21 for Jordan’s detailed comparison of Butler and Skene’s approach to penitents.

⁴³⁷ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.97

‘the world does not know yet how (next to God Himself) my dear companion’s inner life and heart were the fountain from which I drew so much life for myself and the work’.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁸ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to her ‘dear friends’ the Priestmans, Jan 4 1891, WL

CHAPTER FOUR

'NOT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'

Introduction: Butler's Ecclesiology

This section of the thesis will suggest that Butler's voice and public theology need to be seen in the light of her statements about ecclesiology and in the context of her shared praxis in Christian ministry both on the campaign trail and in other settings. It is not the intention of this chapter to examine all the arguments which have been previously rehearsed about whether or not she can be described as an Evangelical Anglican.⁴³⁹ Nor is it to discuss the considerable interest which has been shown in her mysticism.⁴⁴⁰ Rather it will explore neglected sources to suggest that there are other questions that should be asked about her churchmanship and other frames of reference in her close alliances with friends and fellow campaigners. Hence her relationships with the Salvation Army and Hugh Price Hughes will be explored together with her biography of Pastor Oberlin.

In considering Hughes, primary sources written by Hugh Price Hughes' wife, Katharine and their daughter Dorothea will be employed.⁴⁴¹ Amongst the primary sources on the relationship between Butler and the Salvation Army are two articles published by the SA in which Butler discusses her friendship with Catherine Booth and

⁴³⁹ See Mathers (2001), pp 282-312; Nolland, (2004); Larsen (2011) p.219 ff.

⁴⁴⁰ See R. Garner, *Josephine Butler: A Guide to Her Life, Faith and Action* (London, 2009); David Scott, 'Josephine Butler and St. Catherine of Siena', in Milbank (2007), pp.51-68; Hester Jones, 'Josephine Butler "The Still Voice of Silence": Prophets and Prostitutes' in Milbank (2007), pp.69-88; Pat Starkey, 'Saints, Virgins and Family Members: Exemplary Bibliographies? Josephine Butler as Biographer', in Daggars & Neal (2006) pp.135-153; Nolland (2004), pp.266-270

⁴⁴¹ Katharine Price Hughes, *The Story of My Life* (London, 1945); Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (London, 1904)

her relationship with the Army.⁴⁴² The tribute to Catherine Booth written by Butler and published in the *Contemporary Review* will similarly receive attention.⁴⁴³ Important themes from Butler's neglected book, *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (1883), will then be demonstrated. Primary sources from the pen of Catherine Booth Clibborn (Katie Booth, 'La Maréchale') and her husband, Arthur Clibborn will be juxtaposed with Josephine's account of events.⁴⁴⁴

Butler's biography of Pastor Oberlin⁴⁴⁵ written the year before her involvement with the SA in Switzerland also contains important insights into her ecclesiology and relevant examples will be given. An important secondary source on her churchmanship is her grandson A. S. G. Butler's *Portrait of Josephine Butler*. It will be argued that statements he made in analysing her church allegiance need to be given more weight than previously. This chapter will suggest that her own statement that she was raised a Wesleyan should be listened to and taken to apply to her theological framework not just her church attendance. Additionally, the centrality of her relationship with the women of the Salvation Army will be asserted in the development of their evolved Wesleyan theology and its application in their individual and joint ministries.

⁴⁴² Anon., 'Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview', in *All the World*, (London) January 1 1891, pp.49-51; Josephine Butler, 'Friends and Helpers – IX' in *All the World*, (London) December 1 1895, pp.365-367.

⁴⁴³ Josephine Butler, 'Catherine Booth', in *The Contemporary Review*, vol. 58 July 1 1890, pp.639-654

⁴⁴⁴ See Catherine Booth Clibborn (La), *They Endured* (London, 1925); and James Strahan, *The Maréchale* (London, 1914) (Strahan was Katie's son-in-law and this book was written at her request as a record of her memories); Arthur Clibborn, *Salvation Army Report for 1883-1884*. For other accounts by Salvation Army women of their experiences in Switzerland see Butler's *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (London 1883), pp.151-6 (hereafter referred to as *Switzerland*).

⁴⁴⁵ *Life of Jean Frédéric Oberlin, Pastor of the Ban de la Roche* (London, 1882)

Hugh Price Hughes

Catherine Booth had already embarked on work with outcasts before Butler took up their cause, but Hugh Price Hughes will serve as a powerful example of someone who, under Butler's direct influence, changed the course of his future ministry. Nolland, who criticises Butler for 'her distancing of things evangelical', says that Butler received 'her best and broadest support 'for repeal from 'Evangelical Nonconformity', but that in Butler's work towards her 'larger vision...of radical spiritual transformation'... 'she bypassed a major segment of the Christian population' with 'similar convictions.'⁴⁴⁶ In respect of Hughes an examination of their relationship will show that she did not 'bypass' Hughes or Wesleyanism but that she might better be described as the bulldozer which pushed Hughes towards the social gospel. The significance of the relationship between Hugh Price Hughes and Josephine Butler has been underestimated and deserves closer analysis.

Butler considered Hughes one of the most effective supporters of her campaign, notably in his role as editor of the *Methodist Protest*, the monthly publication of the Wesleyan Society for the Abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts. As Butler said 'Whenever we wanted a gun fired at the enemy we looked to Mr. Hughes!'⁴⁴⁷ The Annual Report of the Wesleyan Repeal Society stated that Butler found the *Methodist Protest* a 'congenial atmosphere for her prophetic voice'.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Nolland (2004) pp.284, 286

⁴⁴⁷ J. Gregory Mantle, *Hugh Price Hughes*, London 1901, p.44 quoted in William McGuire King, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the British Social Gospel' *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984-5) pp.66-82, p. 69 f/n 17; see also W. T. Stead's remark quoted p.77

⁴⁴⁸ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity* (Cardiff, 1999), p.347, note 67

Hughes is ‘hailed... as a second Wesley...the most influential Methodist leader of his time’, and as ‘the primary inspiration of the ‘Forward Movement’, which sought to redirect Wesleyan Methodist theology towards the salvation of society as well as of individuals.’⁴⁴⁹ Hughes was also an early advocate of the social purity movement which succeeded the repeal movement.⁴⁵⁰ Thus Hughes was not only an important leader in Methodism but one who pioneered a new direction for Methodism in the shift from only saving individual souls to additionally seeking influence on the national stage in transforming society. What deserves greater attention is the direct influence of Butler on Hughes.

Hughes’ biographer notes that Butler spoke at Dover on 18 March 1870, shortly after Hughes had arrived there for his first pastorate, since she had been invited because of the interest shown in her campaign by Rowland Rees,⁴⁵¹ one of Hughes’ congregation – ‘a fiery radical’.⁴⁵² This was one of her first public speaking engagements, and though it was a meeting for ladies, Rees, Hughes and the Area superintendent were on the platform. Oldstone-Moore states that ‘great theme of her speech... was the pitiful degradation of poor and outcast women at the hands of immoral men’, and continues that ‘this vivid picture of cruelty, degradation, and injustice was upsetting to none more than Hughes.’⁴⁵³ Indeed Butler recalled that Hughes ‘seemed moved to the very depths’ he was unable to finish his vote of thanks because ‘he burst into tears and rushed from

⁴⁴⁹ Oldstone-Moore, inside front dust-jacket. On Hughes’ creation of The Forward Movement see also Oldstone-Moore pp. 135 ff, and King (1984-85) pp.66-82, p. 67f.

⁴⁵⁰ *ibid* p.89.

⁴⁵¹ *ibid* p.36

⁴⁵² Maldwyn Edwards, *Methodism and England 1850-1932* (London, 1943), p.148

⁴⁵³ Oldstone-Moore (1999) p.37

the platform'.⁴⁵⁴ The Anglican cleric Henry Scott Holland, who acknowledged Butler's similar influence on him and others, said of Butler's impact on Hughes:

'in the agonized cry that broke from out of the soul of Josephine Butler... he, too, found a prophecy and an inspiration of strange power to hold and to exalt, so that life could never be the same again.'⁴⁵⁵

Oldstone-Moore is careful to make the point that Hughes had not 'merely been upset' by what Butler said: rather he had 'incorporated her views into his own'.⁴⁵⁶

Hughes gained from Butler the 'fundamental insight into the link between the physical and religious aspects of life'.⁴⁵⁷ Subsequently, Hughes was exactly in tune with Butler's thinking and praxis as he sought to put the emphasis in Christian faith not so much on personal holiness as on a quest for social justice and compassion for the poor.⁴⁵⁸

Hughes application of this principle in leading large missions aimed at reaching 'the outcast poor' is well documented. Like Butler, Hughes placed great importance on the assurance that penitents are accepted by God and that the outcast will not be cast out by God.⁴⁵⁹ Rev. W. H. Tindall summed up Hughes' message as

'always this in some way or other, the faithful saying – for the Prodigal son. Thank God, many a prodigal son and daughter, too, heard that message from his lips and found salvation.'⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁴ Josephine Butler quoted in Sarah Tooley, 'The Life Story of Hugh Price Hughes', *Temple Magazine* 1, no.2 (Nov.1897) pp.87-98, p.91

⁴⁵⁵ Henry Scott Holland, *A Bundle of Memories* (London, 1915) p.146; see also pp. 288, 289

⁴⁵⁶ Oldstone-Moore (1999) p.37

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid* p.39

⁴⁵⁸ See for example Hugh Price Hughes, *Social Christianity: Sermons delivered in St James' Hall, London* (London, 1889), p.3 – 'the Gospel preached to the poor'; p.51 – 'the starving man'; p.162 – 'crimes against women'; p.251 – 'Christ and the harlots'

⁴⁵⁹ Oldstone-Moore (1999) p.72

⁴⁶⁰ Rev. W. H. Tindall, 'Tribute to Hugh Price Hughes', *Methodist Times*, Vol. XVIII No.935, Nov 27th 1902, p.833 Column 3

Butler influenced Hughes to understand this as more than only spiritual. The Non-Conformist Conscience and the Social Gospel are big themes in Evangelicalism and Church and society in the second half of the Nineteenth Century. That Hughes was influenced to take up this work by *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883) has been acknowledged.⁴⁶¹ The earlier and continuing influence of Butler, however, suggests that not enough recognition has so far been given to Butler as part of these movements and as an important influence on those like Hughes and Henry Scott Holland who were involved in leading ways.

Hughes' wife, Katharine Price Hughes, and their daughter, Dorothea, also demonstrate the extraordinary significance of Butler for Hughes and his family. Katharine attests Hughes' support for Butler; Dorothea attests the 'lifelong friendship', of Butler and Hughes, and that the women her father admired most among contemporaries were Florence Nightingale, Catherine Booth, Annie Besant and 'above all' Josephine Butler. Dorothea gives as the reason

'because no one had sacrificed more for other women than she had. She had made herself of no account, and had submitted to the cross and shame.'⁴⁶²

Katharine, who was to become the first woman to address the Methodist conference, makes abundantly clear the influence Butler and her campaign had on her own work with outcast women which became a core part of her lifelong ministry. Furthermore, it

⁴⁶¹ See Oldstone-Moore (1999) pp.107-114

⁴⁶² See for example Katharine Price Hughes, *The Story of My Life* (London, 1945), pp.64, 99; Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (London, 1904), p.259 f/n 1

was on this subject that ‘in great fear and trembling’ she first spoke in public, and ‘said a few words about the work we were doing at Brixton.’⁴⁶³

Dorothea makes a claim for her father that Oldstone Moore overlooks:

‘He should also be remembered as the friend and brother of women, for that is what he was.’⁴⁶⁴

According to Dorothea, who graduated from Oxford University, Hughes held that if a woman had a ‘capacity... she was entitled to make use of it’. Intriguingly, Hughes included in the concept of ‘capacity’ woman’s theological abilities: ‘he would beg some women to take an interest in it’.⁴⁶⁵ Butler must surely have contributed to Hughes’ attitude to women and their ‘theological abilities’, as his opinion of her Biblical interpretation will demonstrate.

Hughes on Butler as a Biblical Interpreter.

In considering the relationship between the thought and praxis of Butler and Hughes it must be noted that Hughes specifically expressed a very high opinion of Butler as a Biblical interpreter, yet this has not been given weight either by those interested in Butler and her place as a significant woman Bible interpreter, or by those interested in Hughes.

In a leader article in the *Methodist Times*, a publication which is described by Oldstone-Moore as ‘a national voice for moral and religious reform heeded well beyond the confines of Methodism and Nonconformity’, Hughes writes very favourably of Butler’s book *The Lady of Shunem* – described as recently published. A shorter review published

⁴⁶³ Katherine Price Hughes (1945), pp. 65 & 102

⁴⁶⁴ Dorothea Price Hughes (1904) p. 270; see too Bamford Slack, ‘Tribute to Hugh Price Hughes’, *Methodist Times*, Vol. XVIII No.935 1902, p.834

⁴⁶⁵ Dorothea Price Hughes (1904), pp.267 & 264

in the rival *Methodist Recorder* provides an interesting contrast which demonstrates the powerful influence of Butler's exposition on Hughes in particular, rather than on any and every Methodist commentator. It is necessary to compare them in some detail to appreciate the significance of Hughes' estimation of Butler.⁴⁶⁶

After stating that 'Mrs. Josephine Butler has almost a better right than any other woman in England to write concerning woman's work in the church of God', the *Recorder* reviewer goes on to say that 'From the point of view of a sanctified enthusiasm Mrs. Josephine Butler sees truth in a clear and penetrative light.' Echoing Butler's stated aim in writing *The Lady of Shunem*, he says that 'Fathers and especially mothers' will find these studies, 'helpful and inspiring in the management of their children.' The book – 'a powerful influence for good' – is held to exercise that influence in the 'domestic sphere', albeit the author recognises that it is in this 'domestic sphere' that 'the roots of our national life and character' are to be found.⁴⁶⁷

In contrast, the claims that Hugh Price Hughes makes in *The Methodist Times* for the *Lady of Shunem* and its author are much greater and its influence is not confined to the domestic sphere. Saying that 'MRS.BUTLER modestly claims to be "a parent, no seer, no typical being of any kind, but just a mother, with a good measure of a mother's love and hopes and strong desires"', Hughes reproves her saying that she

'should not carry her humility so far as to forget or deny the prophetic gift which GOD has bestowed upon her. She is as truly a prophetess of GOD as CATHERINE of Siena, whose biography she has so beautifully and sympathetically written.'

⁴⁶⁶ Hugh Price Hughes, 'The Lady of Shunem' in *The Methodist Times A Journal of Religious and Social Movement*, Vol.X.-No.519 London, December 6, 1894 p.825; 'Review: The Lady of Shunem' in *The Methodist Recorder*, Vol XXXV, No. 1932 London Dec13th 1894. On Hughes' founding of *The Methodist Times* and his journalistic activities see Oldstone-Moore (1999) pp.5,6

⁴⁶⁷ *The Methodist Recorder*, Dec13th 1894, p.878

Likening Butler to Catherine Booth, Hughes continues that

‘the old saying of JOEL is once more fulfilled. “The daughters prophesy,” and “the Spirit” is poured forth upon the handmaids.’

Hughes’ verdict on Butler’s Biblical interpretation is equally striking:

‘this brief but profound exposition of certain incidents in the Old and New Testaments is a striking illustration of the fact that the Bible will never be properly understood until women, as well as men, expound it.’

This he says is a ‘much-overlooked truth’. To evidence this he states that Mrs. Butler ‘has some very plain things to say about the treatment of HAGAR, things which, when said, are obviously just.’⁴⁶⁸

The author of the review in the *Methodist Recorder* is more cautious. He recognises Butler’s interpretation as original, but seems to see this as something that needs justifying rather than embracing. Saying that her ‘treatment of Hagar, under the title of “The Bar Sinister”, is perhaps unique,’ he continues ‘but it at least has the merit of common-sense.’⁴⁶⁹ Thus the ‘Sanctified enthusiasm’ and ‘common-sense’ identified by one reviewer are in contrast with Hughes’ opinion that Scripture is being fulfilled as Butler demonstrates ‘the prophetic gift which God has bestowed upon her’ in her biblical exposition.

Influenced by Butler’s words, Hughes soundly criticises Abraham and Sarah for treating Hagar ‘disgracefully’, and follows Butler in accusing contemporary society of similar ‘inexcusable and infamous’ treatment of the outcast. The supreme importance Hughes places on Butler’s biblical exposition as a statement of public theology is seen in his conclusion that

⁴⁶⁸ *The Methodist Times*, Dec 6th 1894, p.825. There is a misprint in the article. At one point she is called Catherine, rather than Josephine Butler.

⁴⁶⁹ *The Methodist Recorder*, Dec 13th 1894, p.878

‘Every minister of religion, every member of Parliament, and every judge should read, on his knees, what Mrs. BUTLER, a prophetess of GOD, has written about HAGAR, “the typical outcast.”’⁴⁷⁰

Butler and the Salvation Army

Next it is necessary to consider Butler’s equally important yet equally neglected relationship with the Salvation Army. In the absence of previous scholarship on this topic, it is necessary in this section to narrate the juxtaposition of events in order for their significance to become clear.

The Salvation Army in Switzerland (1883) is Butler’s account of what she describes as the ‘persecution’ of those who belong to this Christian Army, including the arrest and imprisonment of its members and her own involvement alongside them in the summer of that year. A contemporary review in *The Christian* stated that

“Mrs. Butler’s... narrative of recent experiences in the Swiss republic... ably records an important chapter in the modern history of the struggle for religious freedom.”⁴⁷¹

Butler identifies the values of her campaign with the Reformation Christian values she argues Switzerland is abandoning – Republicanism, the value of the individual as the person for whom Christ died, and individual rights including the freedom to believe and preach.⁴⁷²

As far as Butler was concerned, Katie Booth, the daughter of the founders of the Salvation Army, who was a leader of the SA work in Switzerland was being deprived of

⁴⁷⁰ *The Methodist Times* Dec 6th 1894, p.825

⁴⁷¹ Quoted in W. T. Stead, *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch* (London, 1887), endpapers

⁴⁷² *Switzerland* (1883) p.4

her rights in the same way as the outcast woman.⁴⁷³ However, Katie is not named until Chapter Two. In the first chapter Butler dwells ‘chiefly on the attitude of the religious world towards the invading army of Evangelists’.⁴⁷⁴ Chapter One thus becomes a justification for Butler’s interest in what has happened to the SA in Switzerland and an extended opportunity for Butler to defend them against the criticisms levelled at them by other Christians. In the course of this, Butler reveals quite clearly her core beliefs about Christian ministry, worship and evangelism. Reading the work in the context of Butler’s own wider involvement in the religious history of Switzerland reveals several interesting points which amplify themes and theology of concern to Butler elsewhere. The fuller picture that emerges from Butler’s close attention to these themes and theology in *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* helps to elucidate the question of her churchmanship in which successive readers and scholars have shown such interest. Her all-round theology of the Church is revealed in terms of the Church’s mission, message, constitution and destiny.

Indeed it is the argument of this thesis that the themes developed in *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* give a mature record of Butler’s theology of the Church which brings into question the value of simply defining her as an Evangelical Anglican.

Whilst attention has focused on the relationship between Butler and the Anglican Church, research shows that the Christian body she expressed regret at not being able to spend more time with was the SA. In a letter to Catherine and William Booth, Butler ardently articulated her enthusiasm for the Army, saying that

⁴⁷³ *Switzerland* (1883) p.5. To avoid confusion Florence Soper Booth will be called Florence; Catherine Mumford Booth called Catherine; and Catherine Booth Clibborn called Katie. Arthur Booth Clibborn will be called Clibborn.

⁴⁷⁴ *Switzerland* (1883) p.25

‘there is not a day, scarcely an hour, in which I do not think of you and your fellow-workers, and rejoice in the tide of blessing which our eyes are privileged to see.’

Her next words are highly significant:

‘My own duties, domestic and public, keep me from being among you as often as I would, but I doubt if there is anyone living who is more with you in spirit...’⁴⁷⁵

The words ‘among you’ surely suggest more than a personal visit to the Booths and are more likely to refer to presence at SA meetings. In referring to her duties, domestic and public, it is possible that Butler is including her sense of duty to accompany her husband to Anglican services.⁴⁷⁶ Butler was not the only member of the Anglican Church to show enthusiasm for the Army in what John Kent calls ‘its formative generation’, yet there can surely have been few who expressed that enthusiasm in a more powerful way or made so apparent their desire to spend more time with the Army.⁴⁷⁷

Her words also give a fascinating glimpse into the competing loyalties that Butler experienced and the tensions between her domestic, public and church life. Jacqueline de Vries refers to the fact that the

‘usual sociological categories – denomination, location, class, and generation – can help the historian identify common patterns, but one must also seek to understand how intersecting circles of loyalty, identity and personality shaped each individual’s spirituality and responses to religion (and feminism for that matter).’⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ Letter from Josephine Butler to Catharine Booth of 1882, quoted in Catharine Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves* (London, 1970), p.287

⁴⁷⁶ Letter from Josephine E Butler to Miss Priestman of Wednesday Jan 17th 1883

⁴⁷⁷ John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London, 1978) p.298. On the age and gender of those joining the Salvation Army see also p.301, & G. K. Horridge, *The Salvation Army Origins and Early Days: 1865-1900* (Godalming, 1993), p.225

⁴⁷⁸ Jacqueline de Vries, ‘More than Paradoxes to Offer: Feminism, History and Religious Cultures’ in Sue Morgan & Jacqueline de Vries, (eds.) *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Modern Britain, 1800-1940* (London, 2010) pp.188-210, p.189

It is the argument of this chapter that the importance of Butler's relationship with the SA must be understood in order to understand the 'intersecting circles of loyalty, identity and personality' which shaped Butler's response to religion and the issues for which she fought. De Vries also draws attention to Ursula King's observation that

'the historical investigation of religion is "an issue of ... personal and corporate identity", and requires us to explore both collective and individual stories.'⁴⁷⁹

In investigating the relationship between Josephine Butler and Salvationists, particularly the women of the SA, this chapter will both explore something of their individual stories, as they sought to obey what they believed to be God's call, and show how their interaction, their partnership, affirmed a collective identity as handmaidens of the Lord upon whom the spirit of the Lord had been outpoured. At the heart of their relationship was their belief that they were called to preach and to reach out to what the Booths called the 'submerged', and what Butler described as the 'underground people' amongst whom were the outcast women.⁴⁸⁰

Both Butler's article for *All the World* in 1895 and her earlier interview with the same publication in 1891 make clear the extraordinary effect that reading the first edition of the SA newspaper, *The War Cry*, in 1879 had on her.⁴⁸¹ 'I read every word of it, and I cannot tell you how I felt!' she told her interviewer who was 'astounded' by her words and expression. The interviewer commented that those

⁴⁷⁹Ursula King, *Religion and Gender* (Oxford, 1995) p.222 quoted in de Vries (2010), pp.188-210, p.191

⁴⁸⁰James Strahan, *The Maréchale* (London, 1914) p.21; Josephine Butler, *Switzerland* (1883) p.15, and 'Catherine Booth', in *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 58 July 1 1890, pp.639-654, p.646

⁴⁸¹'Friends and Helpers 1X', *All the World*, December 1895, pp.365-367, p.366; Anon., 'Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview', *All the World*, January 1 1891 (London), pp.49-51

‘to whom the “War Cry” has been the herald of God’s salvation, often speak like that’... ‘But how should that first copy have meant so much to this cultured woman, the wife of a canon of the Established Church.’⁴⁸²

By this time Butler had already been campaigning for ten years to repeal the CD Acts alongside those from a broad range of Christian affiliations but, as her words make clear, the SA newspaper had a profound effect on her. Butler explained that as she ‘read that ‘Cry’’, she was convinced that what she had prayed for throughout her life was being fulfilled by the Salvationists:

‘revival and blessing and help for the millions of the poor and suffering and ignorant, the “submerged” in our great cities’.⁴⁸³

In particular she saw them as the fulfilment of what she called a ‘soul-vision’, which she links with a post-millennialist hymn.⁴⁸⁴

This ‘cultured’ wife of senior clergyman of the ‘Established Church’ not only sought out Army meetings when they began in Liverpool but, in her own words,

‘I always went – even to those *awful* meetings, when you had such riots. And, oh, I have found such help and blessing in army meetings!’⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² ‘Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview’ (1891) pp.49-51, p.49

⁴⁸³ *ibid.* The time frame Butler gives for her ‘soul-vision’ in this interview is ‘a few years before’ the War Cry began publication. However, she does say in the interview that due to her recent bereavement she cannot remember many times and dates. In her letter to William and Catherine in 1882 she is clearly referring to the same vision of light dawning and gloomy mountains which brought to mind the Welsh hymn she quotes in her interview. The dating in the letter would seem to be the more reliable one and thus places her vision in about 1857 at the end of her time in Oxford or in the early years of her time in Cheltenham. What is interesting is the fact that she states that she had been praying hard for revival for some years and that she felt like ‘one dying of thirst, in drought, and in a wilderness.’ This is a striking description of how she felt in the wilderness of the world and Oxford in particular and may have contributed to her empathy with Hagar and other outcast women. See Chapter 3 for her Oxford experience and Chapter 8 for her Hagar exposition.

⁴⁸⁴ p.49. The Hymn she quotes is by William Williams, Pantycelyn (1717-1791) *Dros y Bryniau Tywyll Niwliog/ O’er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness.*

⁴⁸⁵ *All the World*, (1891) pp.49-51, p.49

Thus, in distinction to Timothy Larsen's claim that Butler 'throughout her adult life habitually worshipped only in Anglican churches',⁴⁸⁶ Butler attests not only her regular attendance at Salvation Army meetings but also that she valued the meetings, not just for herself, but because, looking at the 'ragamuffins' who attended, she

'saw after a week or two, a ray of the light of Heaven in the faces of those poor, poverty-stricken creatures, drawn out of obscurity, misery and vice'.⁴⁸⁷

The SA was reaching the outcast section of society with which Butler was particularly concerned, and she said that it was worth leaving the noisy meetings with an aching head but a rejoicing heart. Her vivid recollection of a speech by Catherine Booth about underground people points to the close identification of their thinking on this matter.⁴⁸⁸ Butler mentions one instance of 'help and blessing' particularly, and it is of fundamental importance for understanding her relationship to the SA. She had been called to appear on Friday May 5th 1882 before 'the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts'. She was 'dreading it unspeakably', since: 'You can think what it would be to go before a lot of men, all of them asking the most cynical and horrid questions'. She states that the evening before she went into 'the Rink', the SA meeting place on Oxford Street and she felt

'comforted somehow by just being there. It was a sort of holiness meeting. People got up and stated their case. So I stated *my* case-partly. I was recognized, and some of them seemed to know what was before me, and they all prayed for me, and I went away *so* strengthened! I felt it next day when I went before the Committee, too'.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁶ Larsen (2011), p.221

⁴⁸⁷ 'Friends and Helpers' (1895), pp. 365-367, p.366

⁴⁸⁸ 'Catherine Booth', (1890), pp.639-654, p.646

⁴⁸⁹ 'Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview' (1891), pp.49-51, p.50 See also Jordan (2001), p.209

Whilst Butler said she ‘wandered’ into the Rink, her other remarks make clear she was in the habit of attending meetings and the Rink was the main SA meeting place in Central London.

A reference in *Switzerland* (1883) appears to describe another SA meeting which made an equally profound impression on her. Whilst she was in silent prayer Salvationists drawn from the ‘poorest of the people, men and women who had been unearthed from... dark dwellings of that lowest stratum of society’, came and prayed with and for her. This she described as ‘blessed ministering!’ Butler was ‘deeply touched by the loving intercession on my behalf of these poor saved outcasts’, and said this was the way to win ‘converts to God’. That one Salvationist reminded her of paintings she had seen in Italy of St. Francis ‘bathed in a light not of earth’, is a vivid reminder of the ‘cultured’ status of the lady being prayed for by this ‘jailbird’.⁴⁹⁰

The close identity of Butler and the SA is underlined in comments from the SA. The objective of the 1891 interview was to find out from Mrs. Butler ‘the way in which she had come to be “one of us”” in ‘heart and spirit’.⁴⁹¹ Katie Booth also wrote that ‘*your* work is *our* work – *one*’, and defined it as getting to

‘the masses, the lost, the outcast, the rejected... the prisoners of sin and misery – to break their chains and proclaim deliverance to them in the name of Jesus.’⁴⁹²

The Salvation Army in Switzerland (1883)

It is important here to turn to an analysis of Butler’s convictions about the Salvation Army and the Church in general as expressed in her book *The Salvation Army in*

⁴⁹⁰ *Switzerland* (1883) p.16

⁴⁹¹ ‘Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview’ (1891), pp.49-51, p.49

⁴⁹² *Switzerland* (1883) p.231

Switzerland. The work of A.S.G. Butler would appear to be the only other examination of this book, as he writes

‘I was surprised... that my grandmother... should take up these noisy evangelists – ... yet this is undoubtedly one of the best books she ever wrote. Much of it is almost thrilling to read.’

He explores what her book reveals about events in Switzerland and draws conclusions about her churchmanship.⁴⁹³

In July 1882 Butler was in Switzerland for a Federation meeting and was able to support Katie Booth and indeed join in her battle for the SA to be allowed to minister there.

Since their arrival the previous winter, Katie, Arthur Clibborn and their fellow officers had experienced a pattern of opposition familiar to emerging religious groups. They were opposed by the Swiss on three grounds: firstly, they were not a recognised Protestant or Catholic denomination; secondly, and of great importance, the Swiss disapproved of women being allowed to preach; and thirdly, because of the noise and disruption occasioned by the Army and their opponents. Clibborn said that the assembled crowd contained ‘the rowdiest rowdies of the city’ including ‘dynamitards... who had fled to the free city of Geneva out of all nations’; they

‘shouted, yelled, sang dynamite songs, jumped on the forms, whacked the gallery rails with sticks, swore, blasphemed against God with a din which was like the roaring of the ocean.’⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ A. S. G. Butler (1954) p.129. For information on ASG’s relationship with Josephine and the sources he used, see A. R. C. Bolton, *The Six Brides of Dilston* (Bognor Regis, 1984), p.91.

⁴⁹⁴ Arthur Clibborn, quoted in *Switzerland* (1883) p.66 footnote. See also *Salvation Army Report for 1883-1884*, p.50. On this type of noisy protest and opposition to the SA in particular, see Horridge, (1993), ch.4 and pp.225ff; and A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914*, (London, 1976), chs. 3 & 4.

Additionally, Butler drew attention to the link with prostitution and the way brothel keepers reacted like ‘the sellers of the shrines of Diana, fearing that the hope of their gains was threatened’. Her sentiment was echoed by Katie: ‘it is those who are interested in, and gain by sin, who fight against us!’⁴⁹⁵

Butler witnessed Katie’s arrest at the end of the funeral of Charles Wyssa, who had died following a beating from his workmates and was regarded as a Salvation Army martyr. The opposition to the Salvation Army thus involved serious physical violence and intimidation including physical assaults on the women, which the Army claimed the authorities did nothing to address.⁴⁹⁶ Indeed, the persecution the Salvation Army faced came from a variety of quarters and could be said to be a Swiss republican echo of what Hugh McLeod described as

‘the rabble and the gentry... working together against what they perceived to be dissent from the established order.’⁴⁹⁷

Butler’s *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* was much publicised at the time, including pre-publication advertisements at both the beginning and the end of Arthur Clibborn Booth’s *Salvation Army Report for 1883-1884*. The significance for the Army seems to have been both in terms of news of what had happened and as a fund- raiser, and it can readily be seen why Butler’s book was useful in these contexts.⁴⁹⁸ She was enthusiastically admiring of the Army and damning about the established churches in

⁴⁹⁵ *Switzerland* (1883) pp.32 & 260

⁴⁹⁶ Wyssa was suffering from the pre-existing condition of Tuberculosis. See G. Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity: The Campaigns of Josephine Butler* (New York, 1971), p.231; Arthur Clibborn, *Arrest, Imprisonment, Trial, and Acquittal of Miss Booth and Comrades* (London 1883), pp.50 & 68; and *Switzerland* (1883) p.156

⁴⁹⁷ H. D. McLeod *Religion and the Working Classes 1850-1914* (London, 1996), p.28; see also H. D. McLeod, *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities 1830-1930* (London, 1995), p.24

⁴⁹⁸ Clibborn (1883) pp.2, 33, 35

Switzerland, whom she characterised as, at best, standing by whilst Christians were being persecuted and prostitution was being condoned. Her book is intrinsically concerned with demonstrating the dead hand of established Protestant religion in opposing all evidences of ‘vital Christianity’. As will be seen, as far as Butler was concerned, the Salvation Army in Switzerland, led by that ‘handmaid of the Lord’ Katie Booth, was behaving in all sorts of non-establishment ways as they reached out to the outcasts with clear success.

Butler on Calvin’s Geneva

Butler first visited Geneva in 1873 to begin campaigning against the State regulation of prostitution as part of a speaking tour that led to her writing *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* (1884/1913). She later wrote that she could not ‘easily forget the impression of that first visit’. Describing Geneva as ‘a city of glorious traditions, and formerly the stern upholder of liberty of conscience...in whose midst there is still high profession of religion and spirituality,’ Butler continued with two criticisms of the citizens: firstly, that ‘many of your best men and women find “the social evils” and ‘Governmental iniquities... too horrible to speak of’; and secondly, that some of ‘the professing Christians of Geneva seemed to be the most deeply in love with the system of legalised vice.’ Then, uncompromising as ever, Butler stated that she found herself wondering how God would judge Geneva: ‘what, I asked myself, will be your judgment at the last?’⁴⁹⁹

In the 1890s Butler experienced sustained and violent opposition to the Federation’s campaign in Switzerland which it seems she set in a larger historical and theological context. Referring to one night as being like the French revolution and to the effigy of a

⁴⁹⁹ *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London, 1896), p.94

female co- campaigner being burned in the street, she quoted the words of the editor of *Le Genevois* – ‘Christianity is dead in Geneva’ – and she likened this to the ‘profane mob around the Cross’, adding ‘Was He dead? Before the words were well out of their mouths, He quietly *rose again*.’⁵⁰⁰

A Genevan response to the untutored, unauthorised Salvation Army was “Quelle audace! What has this group of children to teach us in the city of Calvin?”⁵⁰¹ At an earlier date Butler, displaying knowledge of both the Bible and scholarship, had no hesitation in challenging Calvin and his city.

Privately, in a letter to her sister, Butler suggested that Switzerland was the worst place for cruel treatment of women.⁵⁰² Her explanation for this was gendered, theological, sarcastic and based on her own acute awareness of what, or rather who, could be seen on the streets of Geneva:

‘It is the combination of the greedy insatiable debauchery of Paris, with the cold, heavy, old testament [sic] repression and ‘Thrust her through with a dart’ spirit of Calvin... Yet there is never a prostitute to be seen... , they are locked up and never seen, how beautiful!’⁵⁰³

Butler’s characterisation of the ‘spirit of Calvin’ is devastating. She applies a Biblical command to put a beast to death, not to a ‘beast’ but to women, pronounces that this equivalence is at work in the cruellest incarceration of prostitutes she has known, and blames Calvin. This is not the only negative remark Butler makes about Calvinism, nor the only one she includes in *Switzerland* (1883). Butler, with a choice of vocabulary

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted in A. S. G. Butler (1954), pp.128 & 119

⁵⁰¹ Catherine Booth Clibborn (La Maréchale), *They Endured* (London, 1925), p.27

⁵⁰² Letter from Josephine Butler to her sister, Harriet Meuricoffre, from Neuchatel, January 21 1875

⁵⁰³ Letter to Harriet (Jan 21 1875)

that conjures up gaining freedom from slavery and achieving gender equality, wrote of having to be emancipated from the

‘dismal and repelling impression made upon me in childhood by attending some services in a Scottish Presbyterian Church’.⁵⁰⁴

It is necessary to examine her characterisation of the spirit of Calvinism to demonstrate what justification she felt she had for it. Butler’s reference to ‘Thrust her through with a dart’ is to Hebrews 12:18-22, where the author, whom she takes to be Paul, is contrasting the Old Testament covenant with the superior new covenant in Christ.

Calvin in teaching, similarly, that the Law was a shadow of good things to come, said that formerly ‘by earthly objects, the favour of the Lord was displayed, as well as his punishment inflicted’ – God showing ‘his good will towards believers by means of present blessings,’ exhibiting ‘spiritual felicity under types and emblems’.⁵⁰⁵

Calvin, following Paul, uses Sara and Hagar as an allegorical illustration without commenting on the morality of Sara and her offspring being ‘free and entitled to the inheritance’ whilst ‘the offspring of Agar was born in slavery, and could never attain to the inheritances’. (Gal. 4:25, 26) He argues that his readers are not under that law.

Calvin links this with Romans 8:15, which states that Christians have not ‘received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father’.

In this context of discussing Galatians 4:25, 26, and Romans 8:15, Calvin writes about Hebrews 12:18-22 where the writer to the Hebrews alludes to the Old Testament command that the holy mountain must not be approached and that ‘if so much as a beast

⁵⁰⁴ *Switzerland* 1883 p.11

⁵⁰⁵ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. A New Translation by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, 1845), Book Two 11: 7

touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart'. Calvin's point is that, in the Christian dispensation, God's people do not have to live in fear and can address God as 'Abba, Father'.⁵⁰⁶ However, it would appear that what Butler objected to was the association of a woman with the putting to death of an animal that should not draw near to God's holiness. This Butler believed had influenced attitudes to women in Geneva. It seems likely that the command was applied to women in the context of accusations of witchcraft as a Scriptural warrant for execution. Whether or not Calvin or Calvin's Geneva employed this verse in this way is beyond the scope of this present study. How Butler came to associate Calvinism with a 'thrust her through with a dart' mentality she does not say, but if she knew of the passage from Calvin's *Institutes* with its juxtaposition of Hagar, who for Butler was the typical outcast, and death by stoning or blade, it would explain her acerbic characterisation of 'the spirit of Calvinism'. Anna Jameson who will be seen in Chapter Five to have been an influence on Butler stated that all the women condemned for heresy in the inquisition 'did not equal' the number of women tortured and killed as witches in the 'first century of the Reformed church', and she drew attention to the fact that Scripture was used as the justification for this.⁵⁰⁷

Theological Affinity between Catherine Booth and Butler

Butler's theological affinity with Catherine Booth will next be explored through Butler's texts on the SA and through the work of the present day scholar, John Read. Reasons for Butler's affinity with Catherine Booth are easily found in their shared

⁵⁰⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* (1845) Book Two 11:9

⁵⁰⁷ Anna Brownell Jameson, *Sisters of Charity, Catholic and Protestant, Abroad and at Home* (London, 1855), p.283. Writing of the large number of women who were killed, Barbara Crandall describes the witch trials as 'frenzies of persecution', and points out that both Calvin and Luther supported them. See Barbara Crandall, *Gender and Religion: The Dark Side of Scripture* (London, 2012) p. 132

views on outcast women: Catherine Booth had ‘preached redemption for prostitutes ever since her first visit to the Midnight Movement for Fallen Women in Bermondsey’ in the mid 1860s.⁵⁰⁸ A contemporary testified to Catherine’s ‘adaptiveness for this work’, and importantly, Read notes that she ‘soon discovered’ that ‘temporal deliverance’ was necessary in order for the prostitutes to respond spiritually.⁵⁰⁹ Like Butler, Catherine felt she must

‘go and walk the streets and besiege the dens where these hellish iniquities are going on. To keep quiet seemed like being a traitor to humanity.’

Thus she ‘supported Josephine Butler’s reform campaign with unequivocal enthusiasm’.⁵¹⁰

Butler made the big claim that the ‘great question of the status of women has been in some degree solved by Mrs. Booth’s existence’, and drew attention to ‘the influence which her life and work have had upon the question of the capabilities of women.’

Butler was quite categorical that the question of the ‘public ministry of women’ had been settled by God blessing it ‘signally’ and ‘in the face of the whole world’. ‘No doubt’, she rounded off, ‘*He will know how to justify Himself in so doing.*’⁵¹¹

Butler endorsed also what was for her the fundamental concept that the Army is

‘so entirely Protestant, that it imposes no special form of belief on its converts, (beyond the broad, essential doctrines of our Christian faith)’.

⁵⁰⁸ Roy Hattersley, *Blood & Fire: William and Catherine Booth and Their Salvation Army* (London, 1999), p.305

⁵⁰⁹ John Read, *Catherine Booth: Laying the Theological Foundations of a Radical Movement* (Oregon, 2013), p.19

⁵¹⁰ Catherine Bramwell-Booth, *Catherine Booth: The Story of Her Loves* (London, 1970), p.395; Hattersley (1999), p.306

⁵¹¹ ‘Catherine Booth’, (1890), pp.639-654, p.648; *Switzerland* (1883) p.28; ‘Friends and Helpers’ (1895), pp. 365-367, p.366, 367

However, her statement that the Salvation Army was ‘the greatest movement’ of the age rested on more than this.⁵¹² An exploration of the theological thought and praxis of Butler and Booth will demonstrate why Butler was so enthusiastic about the SA.

John Read, arguing that Catherine Booth was ‘the principal architect of The Salvation Army’s theology’, demonstrates convincingly the debt she owed to Wesley’s soteriology, ecclesiology, pneumatology and eschatology.⁵¹³ Butler also drew a parallel between Catherine and Wesley saying that, like ‘John Wesley she was pre-eminently a preacher of righteousness’.⁵¹⁴

Read argues that Catherine’s theology resulted in ‘a movement within the church marked by extraordinarily effective cross-cultural mission’, and ‘an astonishing optimism regarding the potential of human lives transformed by grace.’⁵¹⁵ Butler testified to that effectiveness and applauded that optimism.

A key aspect of Butler’s churchmanship was her differentiation between the essential aspects of the Christian Church and its outward forms. So she distanced herself from endorsing the Army’s ‘adoption of military titles’, and was careful to state that she had respect for ‘harvest work’ in every church and sect, but described herself as ‘a partizan’ [sic] concerning ‘the spirit and the essential work of the Army.’⁵¹⁶ Catherine Booth similarly asserted the importance of an ecclesiology which

‘differentiated between the *esse* and *bene esse* of the church, recognising the institutional character of the church to be of its *esse*, but the forms of its institution to be of its *bene esse* and therefore open to reform and renewal.’⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² ‘Friends and Helpers’ (1895), pp. 365-367, p.366

⁵¹³ Read (2013) p.25

⁵¹⁴ ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890), pp.639-654 p.645

⁵¹⁵ Read (2013) p.25

⁵¹⁶ *Switzerland* (1883), p.7

⁵¹⁷ Read (2013) p.203

Catherine wrote in *Aggressive Christianity*:

“While the Gospel message is laid down with unerring exactness, we are left at perfect freedom to adapt our measures and modes of bringing it to bear upon men to the circumstances, times, and conditions in which we live-free as air.”⁵¹⁸

Butler said that her concern had been for the most ‘disinherited’ and the Salvationists were preaching to ‘every creature’. Butler amplified her commendation of the achievements of the Army by describing for her Swiss readers the state of British cities and their ‘underground population’.⁵¹⁹ Accepting that some Salvationist methods may have been repugnant to those of ‘the more refined classes’, she emphasised the effectiveness of ‘their manner of dealing with the classes... whom they seek to save’.⁵²⁰ The ‘testimony of transformed lives and faces’ is evidence that the Salvation Army had reached these people, and she added that ‘I have seen them’.⁵²¹ She was critical of those who placed loyalty to a particular sect or form of worship above discerning that God was at work through the Salvation Army and rejoicing in what they were achieving.⁵²² She endorsed the opinion that ‘teaching may nourish the churches, it does not tend to enlarge them,’ saying that some of the success of the Army with the ‘lower classes’ is due to ‘the fact that they never allow dullness to reign in their assemblies.’⁵²³

Butler and Booth believed in the fundamental importance of ‘the universal moral law’ by which they believed God governs creation.⁵²⁴ They had the same understanding of the atonement that the “great glory of the Gospel of Christ is that it brings us back to

⁵¹⁸ Quoted in Read (2013) p.203

⁵¹⁹ *Switzerland* (1883) p.15

⁵²⁰ *ibid* pp.9, 10

⁵²¹ *ibid* p.15

⁵²² *ibid* p.12

⁵²³ *ibid* p.12f & p.9

⁵²⁴ Catherine Booth quoted in Read (2013) p.40

love His Law’,⁵²⁵ and that the Holy Spirit enables Christians to love God and other people. The image of God is restored so people have ‘perfect love of God and humankind’. In this way through a voluntary commitment to keeping God’s Law and through the power of the Holy Spirit, harmony ‘with ourselves...the moral law, and ...God’, is restored.⁵²⁶ So morality was achieved not by coercion and legislation but by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Both were post-millennialist and believed with Wesley that ‘as people come to love God and love one another, the reign of God begins, a reign that will culminate in history, in the Millennium’.⁵²⁷

Another aspect of Booth’s soteriology that Butler endorsed was the restoration of men and women in the image and likeness of God.⁵²⁸ Consequent on this there was no need for perpetual penitence and no disability attached to women because of the Fall. The promise of Joel, fulfilled at Pentecost, endowed women equally with men to be part of ‘God’s great company of preachers’ – all were ‘ordained’ and told to ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature!’⁵²⁹

Like Butler, Booth reacted against Calvinism but she was not antinomian as Read demonstrates. Booth believed in prevenient grace and argued that the church is called to express this grace in its social mission. Thus the ‘invitation to eat and drink, the provision of hospitality, the alleviation of poverty, the healing of the sick are a free expression of God’s love for humankind’ and can persuade ‘the sinner intellectually and emotionally’, bringing conviction of sin and a need for God.⁵³⁰ This is exactly in line

⁵²⁶ Booth, quoted in Read (2013) p.39

⁵²⁷ Read (2013) p.206

⁵²⁸ *ibid* p.207

⁵²⁹ Booth quoted in Read (2013), p.174

⁵³⁰ Quoted in Read (2013), p.47

with Butler's approach that through experiencing human love the outcast may then respond to the love of God.⁵³¹

The Salvation Army embodied Butler's kind of Christianity, her kind of soteriology, issuing in her kind of ecclesiology in which women equally with men were both justified and sanctified and where there was no distinction between lay people and ordained ministers. All were called and charged with preaching the Gospel. In their ecclesiology 'without denying or undervaluing' the 'experiential or devotional character' of entire sanctification - 'the social, moral, and ethical aspects' were emphasised. Butler argued this through her praxis: dying prostitutes could have assurance of forgiveness but the churches should focus on reaching out to the outcast not on spiritual sweetmeats. Butler shared with Katie that it is 'a contemptible thing to try to load oneself with every blessing, while one is doing very little for the outer world.'⁵³² Butler referred to Evangelicals being 'gorged with spiritual "sweetstuff" and angrily longed for dynamite.'⁵³³

The SA and Butler were focused on the practical effort to bring the lost prodigal back to the Father's house'.⁵³⁴ They looked beyond the perhaps wild exterior of those cursing God and them. As Katie Booth wrote in a letter from prison to her fellow Salvationists: 'Look always below this rugged envelope to the starving souls which it clothes.'⁵³⁵

Describing an evening when through her cell window all she could hear was what sounded like a pack of wolves, Katie said:

⁵³¹ See Jane Jordan, 'Introduction', in Jordan and Sharp, vol.1 pp.31-42, p.37; and *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (London, 1896), p. 172

⁵³² *Switzerland* (1883) p.238

⁵³³ Letter from Josephine Butler to Miss Forsaith 1902, cited in A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (London, 1954), p.210

⁵³⁴ See Butler's quotation from a hymn about the prodigal in *Switzerland* (1883) p.76

⁵³⁵ *Switzerland* (1883) p.96

‘it seemed to me that in place of their howling and cursing I heard a cry for mercy and pardon at the moment of death’.⁵³⁶

Above all, Butler commended the ‘humanness’ shown by the Salvationists to those they met. She said that an ‘outcast’ knows the preacher, ‘has a love for souls’ but that a human encounter was needed: ‘a loving hand’ needs to be outstretched before the outcast believes that he is truly accepted. This, Butler attested, was something that the Salvationists did well.⁵³⁷

‘Humanness’ was an important theme for Butler and could be said to sum up her approach to trying to reach the outcast. Regarding the Parable of the Prodigal Son she said that the saddest part always seemed, to her, to be ‘No man gave him anything’. He could have been called back to his right mind by someone showing him humanness. In her own praxis Butler stroked the hair of dying women in the workhouse infirmary and invited prostitutes to come home with her to be cared for there.⁵³⁸

Both Butler and the Salvation Army saw the Holy Spirit at work in Switzerland. Katie wrote that ‘A blessed Holy Ghost revival swept over the land, almost every church sharing in its results.’⁵³⁹ They believed that the battle in Switzerland was against spiritual forces, not merely bad men. Butler gave as evidence of God’s presence with the Army they ‘have tried the power of Jesus name’ and been able ‘to cast out demons’. Exorcism was a gift that Butler later said she would have liked.⁵⁴⁰ Katie said ‘nothing

⁵³⁶ *Switzerland* (1883) p.239

⁵³⁷ See *Switzerland* (1883) p.10; ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890), pp.639-654, p.641

⁵³⁸ See Jordan (2003) pp.31-42, p.37; and Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Her Niece Edith Leupold, 8 March 1867, in Jordan & Sharp, vol.1 pp. 82-88, p.86

⁵³⁹ Catherine Booth Clibborn (La Maréchale), *They Endured* (London, 1925), p.180

⁵⁴⁰ *Switzerland* (1883) p.19; for Butler writing on people ‘Satanically possessed’ see too ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890) pp.639-654, p.642.

else could enable us to overcome and be victorious [but] the Holy Ghost, the Fire;'⁵⁴¹
As a result of the 'Baptism of His Spirit', she said, Salvation Army officers 'are endued with Power from on High' and given 'a divine love and tenderness which draw poor suffering humanity to Christ.'⁵⁴² One further way that the Salvation Army influenced Butler is found in her comment that she was

'so struck with Mrs. Booth's method in... prayer-meetings. She seemed to show me the *rationale* of united prayer – all in harmony and of one spirit. "Push it up!" she would say, if there were any flagging.'⁵⁴³

Finally, Catherine's concern for justice was something that Butler much admired and in the Swiss context it was highly important that failure to acknowledge a woman's right to preach was linked by Butler and Catherine with another liberty issue concerning women – state regulated prostitution. Butler said of Catherine:

'She was such a woman for seeing what was unjust! We are alike there, only I was mad over the injustice itself. *She* felt that these legislators were stumbling-blocks in the way of the Lord.'⁵⁴⁴

Butler says she was fighting for principles and Catherine viewed legislators as an obstacle to the Gospel. Perhaps this is why Hattersley commented that Catherine's beliefs about women and the church paralleled those of Butler about society.⁵⁴⁵
However, Butler wanted more equality for women in the Church as well as in society and as Walker shows under the influence of radical ideas, Catharine Booth came to regard women's right to preach as an issue of religious liberty akin to the right of workingmen to be counted worthy of having the vote. 'Including women's preaching within the notion of rights defined the exclusion of women as a political as well as a

⁵⁴¹ Catherine Booth Clibborn (1925) p.27

⁵⁴² *ibid* pp.99-100

⁵⁴³ 'Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview' (1891) pp.49-51, p.51, presumably a reference to prayer ascending to the throne of God.

⁵⁴⁴ *ibid* p.51

⁵⁴⁵ Hattersley (1999) p.305

theological problem, and it emphasized the Church's denial of religious liberty to women.⁵⁴⁶ Butler thought likewise: the Swiss struggle was both political and spiritual.⁵⁴⁷ The two aspects are seen more clearly as intertwined in the Swiss conflict than in Britain, which demonstrates how important a consideration of *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* is in any assessment of Butler.

Shifts in Strategy

Although Butler stated that her 'personal interviews' with Catherine Booth were 'rare', she shared a platform with her on many occasions and Butler had sustained contact with other women of the Army like Florence Soper Booth and Catherine Booth Clibborn.⁵⁴⁸ Research shows that in these interactions three significant shifts relating to women and ministry occurred: firstly Butler adopted the Army's practice of 'sending class to class'; secondly, she involved young unmarried women in actively campaigning against state regulation of prostitution; thirdly, she asserted the right of women to preach by doing so herself. Additionally, the role of Army women in the public and private prayer meetings held to pray with Butler about her campaigns will be demonstrated as significant. How these shifts came about will be examined in the context of Butler's friendship and partnership with various Army members including the Booths and Rebecca Jarrett.

Butler's first significant shift of method whilst in collaboration with the women of the SA is mentioned by Jordan, who also records regular correspondence between Butler

⁵⁴⁶ Pamela Walker, 'Gender, Radicalism and Female Preaching in Nineteenth Century Britain: Catherine Booth's Female Teaching' in Calvert-Koyzis & Weir (2009) pp.171-184, p.180

⁵⁴⁷ See *Switzerland* (1883) p.6; 'Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview' (1891), pp.49-51, p.49

⁵⁴⁸ Catherine Bramwell-Booth (1925) p.394.

and Florence in the Spring of 1885 as Butler's ideas are developing. The shift was Butler's embracing of the Salvation Army principle of 'sending class to class'. On Rebecca Jarrett's release from prison following the Maiden Tribute scandal, the chaplain wanted to keep her as his housekeeper if Butler did not want her back. However, Butler was clear 'I do want her' and this points to a major development in Butler's methods that is of real interest here. Well meant as the chaplain's offer was, Butler foresaw a different ministry for Jarrett.

In training Jarrett to visit brothels to speak and pray with the inmates and the proprietors, Butler departed from her previous practice and as Jordan notes it was a far departure from the model of rescue work at Clewer where only ladies of good character were employed and then forbidden to speak with the rescued women lest they be corrupted. Jarrett who was as Jordan says 'still battling not to drink' was sent by Butler to persuade others out of a life of prostitution and she proved to be very effective.⁵⁴⁹ Jordan makes interesting and detailed comparisons with the methods of others, however, she does not explore the way in which it was the personal influence of the ongoing relationships with Army leaders that seems to have changed Butler's strategy. In replying to a letter from Florence Booth, Butler mentioned that Emma Booth had written to say that Catherine was glad Butler and her colleagues 'had found the value of the SA principle of sending class to class'.⁵⁵⁰ Jarrett was one of a succession of women referred to Butler by the SA and Butler expressed admiration for the way that Army training equipped young women for service and answered to some of the need Butler had seen for wider education and employment opportunities for women. The breadth of

⁵⁴⁹ Jordan (2001) pp.218, 219

⁵⁵⁰ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Florence Booth, 26 March 1885, in Jordan & Sharp, vol.4 pp.108-110, p.109

Butler's vision can be seen here in that she had not only played a significant part in making a university education possible for women but that she could also see the importance of equipping women with a background like Jarrett's for the world of work and ministry. It was the SA that was addressing the latter and alongside which Butler worked.

Just as her shift to sending class to class occurred through cooperation with Rebecca Jarrett and Florence Soper Booth, so a belief of the power of young women to convict of past sin occurred through Butler's collaboration with Katie Booth and the other young women of the Army in Switzerland.

Seeing the young women at work in Switzerland and privately hearing from Katie about her experience in Paris, Switzerland and elsewhere drove home to Butler the importance of young women campaigning and the connections with her own cause.⁵⁵¹ The tendency up to that point was to think that campaigning against state regulation of prostitution was unsuitable work for young unmarried women. However, as Butler described it, she realised that Katie Booth was literally the answer to her prayers regarding the best way to combat state regulated prostitution. Butler wrote that when waking Katie and Maud Charlesworth whilst they were staying with her, she realised that

‘those gentle sleepers... seemed the full solution of a question which had taken possession of my mind, and upon which light had been gradually dawning throughout the summer.’⁵⁵²

Butler argued that older women had had far less success against the ‘monster’ of evil than these young

⁵⁵¹ *Switzerland* (1883) p.201

⁵⁵² *ibid* p.200

‘girl warriors, clad in the armor [sic] of most exquisite purity, [who] have been wielding a two-edged sword... against... an evil whose proportions and true nature they had no conception of’.⁵⁵³

Though Butler was aware that her readers might find it shocking, and though she took care to mention that she did not share with Katie ‘the most painful experiences’ connected with her own work, Butler argued that these young women ‘were the instruments chosen of God to lead an attack against the kingdom of darkness’, and that her fellow-workers should recognise the mysterious ways of God and apply this to the Abolition cause.⁵⁵⁴

She became convinced that if young innocent women confronted the men who were supporting prostitution, it might be like Herod seeing the ghost of John the Baptist whom he had had beheaded. Butler used this biblical analogy to say that the conscience of a man might trouble him if he were challenged by ‘the womanhood, the pure girlhood’ whom he had ‘destroyed, or to whose destruction [he had] consented.’⁵⁵⁵

Butler had earlier lamented the lack of a ‘woman strong in the strength of the Lord... to cry aloud’ in Switzerland and used the analogy of John the Baptist. In Butler’s view such a woman’s voice would have been the voice of the slave herself bringing fear to the tyrant.⁵⁵⁶ Thus again Butler believed Salvationists were the fulfilment of her desires in their unhesitating confrontation of those she believed needed to hear ‘the voice of

⁵⁵³ *Switzerland* (1883) p.202.

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid* p.201

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid* p.205. See pp.200-206 for Butler’s full argument.

⁵⁵⁶ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.158, quoting a letter to M. Humbert. Butler records lamenting at an earlier date that no Swiss women would make a challenge like that of John the Baptist. She gave no date, but from other pointers it must have been c.1877

God'.⁵⁵⁷ Her interviewer for *All the World* testifies to the novelty of Butler's argument in this 'prophetic passage', written, the interviewer says, long before Army rescue work, called upon 'the youthful life and energy of officers who have not gotten so far from their girlhood as to forget its perils.'⁵⁵⁸

Evangeline

From the time of waking the 'girl warriors' Butler was closely identified with Katie in the events leading up to her imprisonment and trial, offering her personal support and tactical wisdom. Whilst proposing the significance for Butler of the whole Swiss campaign of the SA and the opposition to it, it is important to assert the overriding impression made on Butler by her involvement with Katie in her Swiss battle. Beyond the common beliefs and approaches to evangelism that they shared, there were two highly significant life events that they went through side by side: a funeral and an imprisonment. It is to these episodes that attention must now turn to demonstrate the third shift in ministry strategy. It is also relevant to note that Katie was nearly the same age as Butler's daughter Eva, whose tragic accident Butler relived every time she awoke.⁵⁵⁹

Katie had agreed to speak at the funeral of Charles Wyssa, a twenty year old, who was one of the first Salvationist converts in Switzerland. When Butler wrote of the Salvationists gathering at the family farm for the funeral she said that

⁵⁵⁷ *ibid.* See *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.188 for Butler's earlier argument, expressed privately to a supporter, that in her *Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* speeches, 'The slave now speaks'.

⁵⁵⁸ 'Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview' (1891), pp.49-51, p.50

⁵⁵⁹ Jordan (2001) p.55. See the whole of this chapter, pp.49-65, for the impact of Eva's accident on Butler. Butler may well have suffered from what is now known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

‘They had the air of a persecuted people, who have a great work on hand, and who look to the far future’.⁵⁶⁰

Consequent on the arrival of the Swiss authorities to arrest Katie for what they regarded as yet another breach of the law, Butler was called upon to speak, perhaps because as a British citizen, but not a member of the Salvation Army, she was less likely to be accused of flouting Swiss laws; perhaps, on the other hand, because it was known that she would speak loudly in defence of religious freedom and women’s right to preach. Subsequently, when she accompanied Katie to be questioned by the police, Butler said, ‘I will be responsible with you for this.’⁵⁶¹ Quite what she meant by that and to whom she would be responsible is unknown. However, after standing in solidarity with Katie and the Salvationists, Butler may have been disappointed that she was not herself charged and imprisoned. Her role at the police questioning was, rather, as an experienced speaker accustomed to confrontation from those in authority who applied that experience in noting the impact of Katie’s words and advising her to continue to press the same mode of address.⁵⁶²

Dramatic as the events of Katie’s arrest were, the funeral itself was where a shift in Butler’s thinking occurred, as she affirmed by her praxis a woman’s right to preach. This is the only way to describe what she did. Previously she had referred to sending ‘my Croydon sermon’⁵⁶³ for publication, but that had not been from a pulpit or in a religious service. Furthermore, in the funeral setting, Butler made other significant and poignant contributions to the defence of women’s right to preach and evangelise. There

⁵⁶⁰ *Switzerland* (1883) p.212

⁵⁶¹ *ibid* pp.212-217

⁵⁶² *ibid* p.218

⁵⁶³ Letter to Mr. Ryley en route to Scotland Monday [10? July 1871] JB 1/1 1871/07/10(11)

is more than one account of the funeral: Katie tells the story in *The Maréchale*, her reminiscences about her life and ministry.⁵⁶⁴ Butler tells the story in *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* but chooses to do so through reprinting selected passages from the account in *En Avant!*, the Salvation Army's 'continental' publication.⁵⁶⁵ Importantly, Butler edits the *En Avant* account and makes clear that she has omitted material. Whether what she omitted is included in Katie's account or whether there are details unique to Katie's account, Butler chooses not to supply them.

Katie's account of Butler's 'brief address which lived long in the memory of those who heard it', is the one that supplies the crucial personal impact of this event on both Butler and Katie, and shows that Butler's words certainly made an impact on Katie and surely summed up the significance of Butler's relationship with her and the S A.⁵⁶⁶

In the account of Butler's preaching at the graveside, as reported in *En Avant* and reproduced by Butler, she tells Charles Wyssa's mother that she 'also had known a mother's sorrow.' In explication she states that she 'had given the name of Evangeline to her dear child – her only daughter – for it had been the desire of her heart that she should be a messenger of the gospel of peace to others.'⁵⁶⁷ Butler goes on to refer obliquely to five year old Eva's tragic fall and death before her parents' eyes, in the words, ' But God had taken her early to Himself.' Butler's account concludes with a rallying cry to battle on, with the focus on the Salvation Army as a whole: there 'might be much yet to suffer; but she believed that Switzerland was to be won for the Lord.'⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ James Strahan, *The Maréchale* (London, 1914) pp.89-91

⁵⁶⁵ *Switzerland* (1883), pp.212-217

⁵⁶⁶ Strahan (1914) p.89

⁵⁶⁷ *Switzerland* (1883) p.215

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid* p.215

When Butler referred whilst preaching at the graveside of Charles Wyssa to her daughter Eva's tragic death, she perhaps had five audiences in view. She addressed the bereaved mother, showing her personal understanding of a mother's grief. She declared to those waiting to arrest Katie that God had delivered Paul and Silas from prison. She addressed the assembled crowd of Salvationists, saying that Paul and Silas had brought others out of prison with them. She perhaps had future audiences in view, who would learn of this historic occasion by word of mouth or publications such as her own book. However, most significantly she turned to Katie and spoke to her, and this is a pivotal statement that has been overlooked.

Katie's account testifies to her long standing relationship with Butler, 'a lifelong friend'.⁵⁶⁹ In this context, Katie, in parallel with the account in *En Avant*, but in simpler language, also recollects and relates Butler's words over the coffin of her dead daughter in the words:

“At the coffin of that child,” said Mrs. Butler, “I consecrated my life to the relief of my suffering and oppressed brothers and sisters. My great desire was that she should become a preacher of the Word of God. And now,” added the mother, throwing her arms round the Maréchale, “by another new coffin I have found my long-lost daughter, an evangelist chosen and blessed of God.”⁵⁷⁰

For Butler, Katie was her 'long-lost daughter' and the warmth of that relationship is attested by the hug that Butler gave her. Crucially, Katie was not only the female evangelist daughter that Butler longed for, but she was 'chosen and blessed of God'.

These recollections of the details of Josephine's remarks, and the connection between her hopes for her daughter and Katie's subsequent ministry, show how much this incident meant to Katie, despite the fact that she had, after all, led an incident filled life,

⁵⁶⁹ Strahan (1914) p.89

⁵⁷⁰ *ibid* p.90.

both before and after the Swiss funeral, as the rest of her memoir shows. The naming of two of her own daughters, Evangeline and Josephine, and her recollection of it in this context, similarly testifies to the enduring impact on Katie of that scene by the coffin.

In addition, Katie's account clearly demonstrates how iconic Katie's ministry and Butler's participation in it were for Josephine. Significantly, Butler wished her daughter to be an evangelist; her early recollections of Eva included conversations about heaven.⁵⁷¹ Butler's sons, Georgie and Stanley, helped her with her campaign to repeal the CD Acts, and Georgie again helped with gathering information about the realities of life in London's brothels in the 1880s when Butler was working to raise the age of consent.⁵⁷² However, Butler remained throughout her life concerned that they needed a clearer Christian commitment. In a diary entry there is also a sense of disappointment that Georgie was content to work in a government office. Furthermore, although her husband George often spoke alongside Josephine, Butler's sons never spoke on a public platform in support of her and her campaigns.⁵⁷³

Katie was the closest Butler got to sharing a speaking platform with a daughter or a son, whereas the Booth family regularly had this experience. This awareness of the difference between the Booth family and her own may underlie Butler's expression of admiration for the Booths and her distancing herself from Catherine's suggestion that lack of prayer by mothers was to blame for their children's lack of commitment.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ Jordan (2011), p.56

⁵⁷² *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.110; Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Anna Maria Priestman, 5 June 1885, in Jordan and Sharp vol.4, pp.113-114, p.114

⁵⁷³ 'Diary' (June 1890-April 1895). Typescript copy of Josephine Butler's Diary. Northumberland Record Office [ZBU/E/3/A/2] entries headed 'Whitsunday May 17 1891 Wimbledon' and 'June 6 1891 Saturday evening Wim'.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Catherine Booth' (1890), pp.639-654, p.652

Early Church Christianity

In her words at Wyssa's funeral, Butler had encouraged the SA with the example of Paul and Silas in jail in Philippi.⁵⁷⁵ The letter Catherine Booth wrote to her daughter in jail makes clear that with her deep knowledge of the struggles of the early Church, she too saw Katie's imprisonment as being in defence of essential Christianity and as a parallel to the imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Acts. She referred to Katie's 'first answer', which echoes the words of 2 Timothy 4:16 describing Paul's first defence of his stance over against the authorities. Catherine further said that it was good that, unlike Paul, Katie had not been alone: Butler had been with her. All three women would have been aware how that passage continues – 'the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear'.⁵⁷⁶ ASG Butler may have been surprised that his grandmother joined those noisy evangelists, but join them she did.

When in the same letter Catherine wrote that she fully acknowledged Butler's 'claim to be mother No.2', one can only wonder if 'the Mother of the Army' meant more by this than a maternal concern for Katie. Catherine did not say 'your second mother', simply 'mother No.2'. This could be seen as in the tradition of using the title 'Mothers in Israel' for female leaders of the Church; however, it is intriguing to wonder if Catherine was conjuring with Butler's role as a leader of Salvationists. There were lots of 'Hallelujah lasses'. Perhaps Catherine saw the potential of Butler to be another Mother

⁵⁷⁵ *Switzerland* (1883) pp.214, 215

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid* pp.232, 233; see too *Life of Jean Frédéric Oberlin* (1882), pp.155, 156

of the Army. Butler reciprocally referred to Catherine as a ‘stern and happy mother-preacher’.⁵⁷⁷

Butler’s relationship with Katie went on beyond their time together in Switzerland and Butler provides evidence of the conflicting loyalties Katie faced. Relating to Fanny Forsaith the ‘sad tale of Mr.Clibborn’, whom she described as ‘deluded’ in becoming a devotee of Dr. Dowie, Butler stated that Katie had never believed in Dowie.⁵⁷⁸ Butler expressed personal support for Katie, who was by this time the mother of ten children. General Booth, according to Butler, ‘utterly abandoned her & took the money wh. she needed for her children.’ When the disillusioned Booth Clibborns returned to Europe, Butler said that Katie was ‘full of gratitude’ for the sympathy Butler expressed in a ‘helpful letter’.⁵⁷⁹

This was not the first time that Butler’s sympathy for Katie and her husband had been aroused, and the previous occasion, which similarly had been a clash with ‘The General’ over a point of doctrine, provides an important insight into Butler’s own theology, or more especially, her evangelistic preaching. In March 1899 Butler told her daughter-in-law, Rhoda, of the quarrel between Katie and her father because she refused to preach hellfire. Butler said that she met ‘poor Catherine’, who is ‘under the black displeasure of her father’, in Brussels. Katie had walked ‘up and down the room crying’ as she told Butler of the ‘cruel letters’ she had had. The reason that Katie was ‘almost expelled from the Salvation Army’, according to Butler, was that ‘in all her meetings

⁵⁷⁷ ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890), pp.639-654, p.652

⁵⁷⁸ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Fanny Forsaith, June 7 1906; see too *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892), pp.456-457, for evidence of another encounter between the Butlers and the Booth Clibborns.

⁵⁷⁹ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Fanny Forsaith, June 7 1906

she preaches only the Love of God and of Christ & will have nothing to do with terror.’⁵⁸⁰

It would appear that Butler continued to function as a second mother – the one to whom Katie turned for advice in her distress at being pushed by her father to choose between him and her husband. According to Butler, Katie wrote to her father: ‘Where does it say that ending a marriage is right?’⁵⁸¹ It is not surprising that Butler was able to say that Katie was grateful for her sympathy: in the midst of Katie’s arguments with her father and her husband about doctrine, and the pressure she was under to comply with the wishes of both of them, Butler’s non-judgmental and humble attitude must have contrasted markedly with William Booth’s censure and the statement that he had no children outside the army.

Conclusion to Butler and the Salvation Army

There is a specifically feminist Christian agenda behind Butler’s support of the SA in Switzerland – the right of women to preach. Butler’s shared experience alongside Katie spoke to the issue of Christianity and women’s consciousness. Butler saw what Katie’s ministry could achieve, spoke to the bereaved mother at the graveside, endorsed the ministry of ‘Evangelines’, faced possible imprisonment herself, had the responsibility of advising the younger woman to try to keep her out of jail, reported back to a crowded Exeter Hall alongside Catherine Booth on the public platform, and received a standing ovation. In her publication she was setting all this forth in support of the SA, but she also mentioned her own role as ‘ordained, so to speak, on behalf of the outcast’.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Rhoda Butler 30 March 1899. See Kent (1978), pp.192-196, for examples of what Butler would have described as preaching ‘terror’.

⁵⁸¹ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Fanny Forsaith, Oct.16 1899

⁵⁸² *Switzerland* (1883), p.5

Katie was leading the SA charge in Switzerland and Butler was referring to being ordained on behalf of outcast women whom she was describing as ‘despised’, a word used of Jesus as the suffering servant. She also applied ‘the low and despised estate of her’ to the outcast woman, and this could be an allusion to the Magnificat as Mary says God ‘hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden’ (Luke 1:48).⁵⁸³ It was bold of Butler to liken the outcast to Jesus, but it was perhaps more bold to liken her to Mary, who had conceived out of wedlock. Butler’s consciousness of gender was of supreme importance here, and it was the SA who recognised her as ‘ordained of God Himself no less truly than her husband’, and campaigned alongside her.⁵⁸⁴

This is the woman who sounded so incensed at being thought of as an Anglican. ‘I have not much sympathy with the Church’, is about as strong a statement as Butler could have made without being disloyal to her husband.⁵⁸⁵ The established Church would not have welcomed or recognised a comparison between itself and the world or a cult. However, Butler’s choice of words in describing her relationship to the established Church – ‘not of the Church of England’ – is a rather telling reference to John 17:14-19, where Christ says he is in the ‘world’ but not of it. Butler’s usage is parallel to Booth Clibborn’s defence of Katie, that in despair she had gone with him into Dowie’s cult ‘though she was in it, she was not of it’.⁵⁸⁶

Butler’s grandson’s comment that what she liked most about the cathedral services was the opportunity for ‘uninterrupted contemplation’,⁵⁸⁷ is equally telling. It is in line with

⁵⁸³ *Switzerland* (1883) p.5

⁵⁸⁴ ‘Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview’ (1891) pp.49-51, p.49

⁵⁸⁵ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Priestman, Wednesday Jan 17 1883

⁵⁸⁶ Carolyn Scott, *The Heavenly Witch: The Story of The Maréchale* (London, 1981), p.201

⁵⁸⁷ A. S. G. Butler (1954), p.166

her appreciation of Quaker meetings and her comments on the noise of Salvation Army meetings. However, undisturbed private contemplation was hardly the prime distinctive of corporate worship in the Church of England, merely the one that appealed to Butler – perhaps in contrast to the barracking George’s attempt to speak on repeal received from his fellow clergymen.⁵⁸⁸ Her love of silence within the Cathedral walls was also in contrast to the complaints that she was disturbing the quiet of the Cathedral Close as her campaign drew noisy and violent opposition.⁵⁸⁹

Butler’s affinity with Salvationists rested partly on the positive views she had in common with them about women’s public ministry. Not only that, but the affinity rested on the concrete experiences she had with them of sharing a platform or a coffin-side pulpit. Butler had said ‘If I were a preacher, I would’,⁵⁹⁰ but alongside Katie she became one. Butler did not find that affinity in theory or practice with the Anglican church. As a preacher and evangelist, a prophet and an apologist, on any public stage that became available to her, what woman did she know in Anglicanism to work alongside to their mutual encouragement? As Murray says, despite the opposition to women holding positions of authority in the church, women themselves had begun to find their own way. Butler and Catherine Booth as ‘mother- preachers’ were certainly doing that.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁸ *Autobiographical Memoir* (1928) p.34. For denominational support and opposition to Butler’s campaigns see W. T. Stead (1887) pp.59 & 24. For Butler on the ‘cowardice’ of Anglican Bishops, see Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Priestman, 25 Oct. 1878.

⁵⁸⁹ Quoted in Jordan (2001), p.234

⁵⁹⁰ *Address Delivered at Croydon, July 3, 1871* (Manchester, 1871) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.155-167, p.156

⁵⁹¹ See Jocelyn Murray, ‘Gender Attitudes and the Contribution of Women to Evangelism and Ministry in the Nineteenth Century’ in John Woolffe (ed.) *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (London 1995) pp.97-116, p.112

Pastor Oberlin

Brief mention of some aspects of the faith of Pastor Jean-Frédéric Oberlin (1740-1826) that Butler extols in her biography will lead into a consideration of A. S. G. Butler's assessment of his grandmother's religion. Butler commended Oberlin because he, too, differentiated between the essential gospel and the outward forms. Butler's presentation of Oberlin's Churchmanship is particularly interesting in that she wants him to be seen as 'evangelic' in the true sense of the word, living and walking by the faith of Christ crucified, and teaching in all its fullness the gospel of our salvation'; yet he had what 'the English protestant' might consider 'false' views 'on points of secondary importance', such as that his dead wife spoke to him.⁵⁹² For a publication of the Religious Tract Society this was a rather heterodox practice to be defending. However, Butler too prayed for her husband George after his death and continued to experience his presence. She argued that she could see nothing in Scripture against praying for the dead.⁵⁹³

Similarly, unusual was Oberlin's definition of himself as an 'Evangelical Catholic'.⁵⁹⁴ His motivation for eschewing a more Protestant appellation was that the 'deep aversion' to titles such as 'Huguenot' or 'Protestant' would lead to failure to win people 'to the Gospel, which is above differences of nomenclature and sect'.⁵⁹⁵ Butler enthusiastically reports that Catholics worshipped and even partook 'of the Sacrament, side by side with the family and Christian friends of Oberlin, of all classes and ages.' Katie Booth was

⁵⁹² *Life of Jean Frederic Oberlin, Pastor of the Ban de la Roche* (London, 1882), p.81

⁵⁹³ A. S. G. Butler (1954) p.214

⁵⁹⁴ *Life of Jean Frederic Oberlin, Pastor of the Ban de la Roche* (London, 1882)

⁵⁹⁵ *Oberlin* (1882) pp.84-86

challenged to declare herself a Protestant and refused.⁵⁹⁶ This fits the picture of what for Butler was her ideal church: she did not espouse any one denomination rather she embraced what she referred to as ‘vital Christianity’.⁵⁹⁷ She, too, could be said to have regarded the Gospel as ‘above differences of nomenclature and sect’. She, too, was aware how denominational labels could create a ‘deep aversion’ and avoided them.⁵⁹⁸

Significantly, Butler describes Oberlin’s realisation that preaching judgment was not going to win people over to Christianity and supplies the Scriptural warrant. Oberlin ‘preached no more upon the pains of hell’ and Butler agrees is ‘not the true way to convert anyone to God’. Rather she approvingly says, ‘Oberlin continued to warn and persuade, basing his arguments mainly on the love of Christ, and the misery of all human beings separated from God.’ These were key ideas for Butler.⁵⁹⁹

Conclusion: ‘Not of the Church of England’

In considering whether Butler perceived common features in the Salvation Army, Wesleyans and Oberlin with which she identified, two characteristics stand out: firstly an emphasis on holiness theology and secondly aspects of what could be called Early Church Christianity.

Butler’s contemporary W. E. Boardman stated that his book, *The Higher Christian Life*, was written to encourage Christians to experience God in a greater way; he writes of two experiences – salvation and sanctification – explaining that believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins at the judgement day is salvation, and believing in Jesus’ power

⁵⁹⁶ Strahan (1914) p.169

⁵⁹⁷ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Miss Priestman, Wednesday 17 Jan 1883

⁵⁹⁸ *Oberlin* (1882), pp.84-86, 155, 156. See her Letter to Miss Priestman, Wednesday Jan 17 1883, for further evidence of her views on this.

⁵⁹⁹ *Oberlin* (1882), p.66

to overcome sin in one's present life experience is sanctification. He went on to identify three different views or systems that shared this basic approach – that of the Lutherans, the Wesleyans and the Oberlinians.⁶⁰⁰

So what connections are there between the Butlers and these strands of the Holiness movement? The value that Josephine put on Pastor Oberlin and his followers has already been demonstrated, as has the influence on her of Moravians and Wesleyans through her mother, the religious milieu of her childhood and her relationship with Hugh Price Hughes. In terms of Boardman and his circle specifically, Butler's own writings again attest her personal knowledge of him and respect for him as she wrote of visiting the house of healing in London that Boardman had started with Elizabeth Baxter. She described him as 'a venerable old American who is at the head of the work,' before going on to further underline their association by saying that he

'hauled me in through the crowd, for he wanted me to see all who were healed and those, as well, who were not.'

On the subject of divine healing Butler was clear:

'There is not a word in the whole Bible which intimates that the beautiful and beneficent gifts of healing were to cease at a given date or forever'.⁶⁰¹

When Butler suggests to Florence Booth that they hold 'a very special united prayer-meeting in London' concerning their mutual concern for the 'very young girls' on the streets, she lists those she wants to attend:

'(Salvation Army, dear friends at Bethsham & a few other consecrated rescue workers). But I would not have any join us who is not of one mind & heart with us...'⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ W. E. Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life*. (Boston, 1858), p.41

⁶⁰¹ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Stanley Butler, 26 Mar 1884. See also ASG Butler (1954) p.169

⁶⁰² Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Florence Booth, 26 March 1885, in Jordan & Sharp, vol.4 pp.108-110, p.108

She believed in divine healing and spoke positively of a healing service she had attended where she witnessed some people healed and some saying 'the Spirit of God was there in such striking and evident power that everyone was held calm and waiting and in awe'.⁶⁰³ She referred to the fact that 'the healer', Mrs. Baxter, who was based at Bethsham had 'offered prayer in her clear voice'.⁶⁰⁴

Thus, a concrete connection can readily be established between Josephine, Boardman and the 'Holiness' strand in Christianity that he was describing.⁶⁰⁵ When George was on the brink of retirement in 1883 Josephine wrote to him saying,

'it is my longing that we both be baptised with the Holy Ghost at this time, that the rest of our lives may be consecrated fully... that we may make *room* more and more, for the spirit of God'.⁶⁰⁶

In addition to these evidences of an interest in contemporary Holiness movements and the work of the Holy Spirit, it has been well documented that Josephine came under the influence of Irvingites in her childhood. Her governess, who used to take Butler to revival meetings, quoted a verse from Mark's gospel to Josephine's mother who had inadvertently swallowed poison: 'though ye drink poison unawares it shall not harm thee'.⁶⁰⁷ Irving based his teaching on healing on this same verse.⁶⁰⁸

Intriguingly, Rebecca Jarrett said that she was looking for the 'faith healing cottage' in Winchester when she first arrived because she had missed the women sent to meet her. What is unknown is whose description of Butler's House of Mercy is this? Was it the

⁶⁰³ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Stanley Butler, 26 Mar 1884.

⁶⁰⁴ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Stanley Butler, 10 Feb 1884.

⁶⁰⁵ Butler says that Sir James Clark told her 'that God is my only Physician (which I knew),' Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Albert Rutson, 22 Feb 1868.

⁶⁰⁶ Quoted in Jordan (2011) p.205

⁶⁰⁷ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Maurice Gregory, 16 March 1902

⁶⁰⁸ C. G. Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London, 1973), p.66

description the Salvation Army used and had communicated to Rebecca, or was it Butler's description, or both?⁶⁰⁹ Whatever the answer, an identification with the Christian groups that emphasised the work of the Holy Spirit was definitely part of Butler's churchmanship.

Secondly, A. S. G. Butler described Butler's faith aptly as having an 'Early Christian outlook', and said that when she talked to Pere Rousseau of 'my church', she meant the whole Protestant body'.⁶¹⁰ He suggested that Josephine was a good friend not only of Katie but of Cardinal Manning, because both had 'that clear understanding of the ultimate meaning of Christianity which was the foundation of Mrs. Butler's faith.'⁶¹¹ As a summation of the complicated picture of Josephine Butler's location in the Christian tradition this statement by A. S. G. Butler is difficult to improve upon:

'She took, encouraged, loved, and made use of all that bore the mark of an absolute and courageous faith. Could she, for example, have chosen two allies from a wider field than one which contained a Cardinal-Primate and a young Salvationist woman?'⁶¹²

As far as human involvement in God's project is concerned, Nolland states that

'Josephine placed great faith in the human ability to gain wisdom from experience over a period of time and gradually create a better, more just and humane society from the bottom up,'⁶¹³

Nolland's analysis of the nature of Butler's views on how the right sort of societal change was going to happen could also be applied to Butler's views on how the right sort of Church and Christian enterprise was to come about.

⁶⁰⁹ Jordan (2001) p.218

⁶¹⁰ A. S. G. Butler (1954) p.168

⁶¹¹ *ibid* pp.167, 168

⁶¹² *ibid* p.168

⁶¹³ Nolland (2004), p.274

Butler believed that God was at work to bring in his Kingdom, and a requirement of men and women's role was to 'gain wisdom from experience over a period of time'. The experience she had of campaigning alongside Katie in Switzerland as she buried Charles Wyssa, was surely the sort of experience that taught her 'what no amount of other teaching' could. As far as Butler was concerned, bringing back the outcast was not going to be by some Masterplan dictated by Church hierarchies. Butler was very wary of placing faith in structures rather than people and of an inflexibility that could not and would not mould itself to the needs of the individual and the specific situation.

In a speech that could have been given by a Salvationist, Butler said,

'Seek women and men first – before any machinery. If you have not got them, seek the breath of that wind which will breathe upon the dry bones, and make them live and spring to their feet. Then let them fall into their places and ranks in our army. Then comes the time for drill; but it is of no use to drill marionettes.'⁶¹⁴

Rod Garner, as Alison Milbank puts it, suggests that Butler failed to draw sufficiently on 'the community of faith and the resources of tradition'.⁶¹⁵ This examination of *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* and *The Life of Jean Frederic Oberlin* has shown that Butler did draw on 'the community of faith and the resources of tradition', but she simply did not limit either to the Church of England. Pastor Monod of the L'Eglise Libre supported Butler and became also 'one of the Maréchale's staunchest supporters'. Monod called Salvationism, 'Methodisme porte a sa plus haute puissance' – Methodism at its most powerful.⁶¹⁶ As Larsen pointed out, when Catherine Booth died in 1890,

⁶¹⁴ Unpublished address quoted in W. T. Stead (1887), p. 101

⁶¹⁵ Milbank (2007) pp.1-11, p.8. See Rod Garner, 'Truth before Everything' in Milbank (2007) pp.34-50

⁶¹⁶ Scott (1981) p.65

‘the Wesleyan newspaper, the Methodist Times, edited by the influential Wesleyan minister, Hugh Price Hughes, declared that she was ‘the greatest Methodist woman of this generation’.⁶¹⁷

Butler told her anonymous Salvation Army interviewer that Booth’s cause and her own were ‘far more one than people are apt to think at first glance!’⁶¹⁸ The wife of an Oxbridge canon theologian and the wife of a pawn-broker turned preacher ‘were kindred spirits’ in many ways.⁶¹⁹ Perhaps, most notably, what Butler and Booth had in common was the way they embraced Early Church Christianity and interpreted and built upon Wesleyanism.

This is notably seen in Butler’s 1892 article ‘Woman’s Place in Church Work’, where she memorably expresses her trenchant criticism of the attitude of the Christian Church towards women, and her admiration of the SA.⁶²⁰ Sarah Amos (Mrs. Sheldon Amos), who was a Methodist, Florence Bramwell Booth of the Salvation Army and Butler all provided responses to the question of woman’s place in church work. Butler’s words are worth quoting at length since they are so expressive of her core concerns about the discrepancy she saw between Christ’s attitude to the outcast and the marginalisation felt by women, including Butler and other women who professed a Christian faith and calling to service for Christ, down the ages.

In writing about woman’s place in church work, Butler shows her nuanced theological understanding of the term ‘Church’, by asking

⁶¹⁷ Larsen (2013) p.89

⁶¹⁸ ‘Mrs. Josephine Butler: Interview’ (1891) pp.49-51, p.3

⁶¹⁹ Catherine Bramwell Booth (1970), p.286

⁶²⁰ ‘Woman’s Place in Church Work’, by Mrs. Josephine Butler, Mrs. Sheldon Amos, and Mrs. Bramwell Booth, *Magazine of Christian Literature* 6 (April 1892), pp.30-37, p.30-32. [Sheldon Amos, pp.32-34, Bramwell Booth pp.34-37]

‘Is the word meant to express a single outward organisation, august, ancient, and venerable; or a number of outward organisations, more or less united by the common acceptance of a great central truth; or the narrow English view “of the Church,” the Anglican State Church; or the great spiritual host of believers?’

Strikingly, the eloquent Butler states that being asked ‘to frame a few words on

‘Woman’s Work in the Church’ is

‘the most difficult subject which could be presented to me to write about. It would be easier for me to speak of the work of women outside the Churches, or, in spite of the Church; and not difficult, though the subject is large, to speak of “Woman’s Work for Christ.”’

Thus, Butler draws a clear distinction between what she categorises as women working for Christ and what might commonly be regarded by her reader and by the churches as

‘Woman’s Place in Church Work’. She continues, that it seems to her

‘that “the Church” has treated woman very much as “the world” – as Society has treated her, from the earliest days till now.’⁶²¹

Nevertheless, Butler characteristically juxtaposes with the attitude of the Church and society, the biblical record of the life of Christ:

‘Yet I am not wholly a rebel in this matter. I see that her[i.e. woman’s] position would have been far worse but for the light which Christ shed upon it, a few broken rays of which light have been permitted to fall upon her state, athwart the complicated inventions of Churchmen and men of the world with the name of Christians.’⁶²²

As well as what Butler devastatingly calls their ‘complicated inventions’, Butler further blames men for the fact that the Church ‘has always allowed herself to be bound, held back, dragged down, more or less, by the overpowering weight of unregenerate male feeling and opinion’.⁶²³ Thus she clearly suggests that, in her view, the Church has always given way to less than Christian male feeling and opinion.

⁶²¹ ‘Woman’s Place in Church Work’ (1892), p.30

⁶²² *ibid* p.30

⁶²³ *ibid*

As she looks at what is being reported of women's work in different denominations, Butler feels 'a limited thankfulness', since, in her opinion, 'Christian men have come on a step or two;' and she damns with faint praise as she continues:

'they are coming on as fast as one can perhaps expect, in the matter of placing women more by their side in all Church work, and not solely under their direction and in subordinate positions.'

Her amplification of those 'subordinate positions' is equally acerbic:

'For too long a time women have been graciously permitted only to sweep out the church, or wash the ecclesiastical robes of the Catholic or Protestant popes and priests, to feed the poor under their supervision, and to read the Bible inside poor people's houses.'⁶²⁴

Yet, significantly, Butler also blames women for submitting to this kind of subordination as she makes the strong statement that 'women themselves have been very slavish'. Furthermore, she makes it quite clear that she believes that gender and ordained status should not be privileged over gifts and experience:

'It is humiliating to see a gifted woman, with dignity enough for a Bishop or Prime Minister, putting herself willingly under the guidance of some inexperienced, *not* gifted clergyboy. The process is very injurious to the clergyboy.'⁶²⁵

Once more Butler asserts the importance of Jesus' application of the moral law equally to women and men; this time in the incident of the woman caught in adultery as recorded in John 8. She states that Christ's 'words and acts' here 'have been my sheet-anchor in all my life's work since then.'⁶²⁶ The forceful way she has been condemning Christian men is further explained by the opposition she experienced from 'men high in the churches, even saintly men', in what she refers to as the 'early days of woman's uprising against inequality in moral matters'. A very important revelation of exactly who had opposed and condemned her follows as she lists 'Mr. Spurgeon, Lord

⁶²⁴ *ibid*

⁶²⁵ *ibid* p.31

⁶²⁶ *ibid* p.31

Shaftesbury, the late Bishop of Carlisle, and the late Archbishop of York' among those 'who wrote to me terrible letters of condemnation and censure'.⁶²⁷ Butler says she dares to reveal this at this much later date since,

'every one of those who wrote to me terrible letters of condemnation and censure...repented sooner or later of having so written, and shewed his repentance in action.'⁶²⁸

Though Shaftesbury's support for the Civil Law Amendment Act has been noted in scholarly consideration of Butler's reform campaigns, no reference has been found to his earlier opposition to Butler.⁶²⁹ Similarly, Nolland listed C.H.Spurgeon, the popular and influential Baptist preacher, as one of the evangelical Non-Conformist clerics from whom Butler received her 'best and broadest support'.⁶³⁰ These fleeting references do not explore whether that support extended over a sustained period of time. If Butler was accurately representing the views and actions of Shaftesbury and Spurgeon, it would seem that their later support for her campaign is in danger of being remembered in their favour at the expense of a rigorous enquiry into the nature and impact of their earlier forceful and censorious opposition.

McHugh noted 'a remarkable shift' in attitudes to repeal and the importance of nonconformist support in achieving it, saying that by 'the 1880s, with strong nonconformist support, the repeal movement was freed from any earlier stigma and in the mainstream of radical politics'.⁶³¹ Whilst other factors were no doubt at play here, clearly, Butler's remarks necessitate a future investigation into how the men she named changed their minds about her campaign against the sexual double standard and its

⁶²⁷ *ibid* p.32

⁶²⁸ *ibid* p.32

⁶²⁹ Loades (2001) p.138

⁶³⁰ Nolland (2004) p.286

⁶³¹ McHugh (1980) p.28

outworking. The role of Butler's biblical interpretation, or simply her gender, in evoking their opposition or provoking their repentance requires further exploration.

Significantly, Butler ends her powerful and hard-hitting article which has argued for women's equality with men in 'the Church, or the Churches', with a final attack on conventual attitudes and an affirmation of the SA. When the churches are more humble she says and recognise

'their desperate need of the help of woman *as man's equal, absolutely*, in her relation to spiritual things, good gifts will no longer languish in a prison-house of conventualities, and women's energies will not have to be folded in napkins and buried under the church floor. The Salvation Army have led the way in this spiritual equality, and emancipation of women's powers. May the Churches follow!'⁶³²

⁶³² 'Woman's Place in Church Work', (1892), p.32, reference to the parable of the talents

PART TWO

THE VOICE OF A PROPHET

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TYPICAL ACTS OF CHRIST THE DANGEROUS LEVELLER

Having investigated the major influences on her thinking in the first section of this thesis it is time to turn to some examples of Butler's biblical interpretation with a view to demonstrating how knowledge of the influences upon her, set out in the first part of this thesis, should lead to a more careful reading of her exposition and application of Scripture. The influences already discussed ranged from artistic to political, from the Salvation Army to Whittier, from an anti-slavery heritage to a deep unhappiness in Oxford. Further influences will be revealed through her attributions in her biblical expositions – suggesting that yet more sources that Butler read, dialogued with, and selectively appropriated, will be uncovered.

It is the contention of this thesis that Butler was an innovative and powerful theologian, who built on the existing sources that she had researched to deliberately and subversively interpret Scripture into the situations she was faced with, proclaiming the word of God in a prophetic way to declare that God is on the side of the outcast.

Butler's Use of the Word 'Type'

In common with other 19th Century Christians, Butler would have been familiar with the notion of typology, and would have heard sermons and read Christian literature which encouraged her to look out for types when she read the Bible. Thus,

‘the characters, actions, and fortunes of some eminent persons recorded in the Old Testament, [were regarded as] so ordered by Divine Providence as to be exact prefigurations of the characters, actions, and fortunes of future persons who should arise under the Gospel dispensation.’⁶³³

⁶³³ Thomas Hartwell Horne, *A Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible*, (London, 1852), quoted in George Landow, *Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*,

Additionally, the setting of George's Oxford theological circle, and the interaction of the Butlers with men like Ruskin and Rossetti and the art and poetry of the day meant Josephine was well placed to be familiar with typology's various applications and inspirations.⁶³⁴ The essence of typology is that one event pre-figures another which enacts it in a superior and more significant way. David Gunn explains that Christian typology 'works by treating the Old Testament text as coded to yield a Christian meaning'.⁶³⁵ In Victorian Christian thought, actions carried out by persons in the Old Testament were seen to be a fore-shadowing of their fulfilment in the life and actions of Christ. Thus, Butler would have been aware that much typological interpretation of Scripture was concerned with arguing that Old Testament characters such as Moses, and King David were pale shadows of Jesus – the prophet, redeemer and king. As Landow outlines, acts recorded in the gospels were seen also as types of behaviour in the still unfolding gospel era.⁶³⁶ When Butler writes of the typical acts of Christ she seems to be using typical in this way seeing Christ as a role model for later Christians.

However, it is important to state that whilst Butler showed her awareness of the 'coded' form of typology she was careful to draw a distinction between this more common approach to typology and what she was doing. Butler was saying that there are echoes of the behaviour she found in scripture mirrored in her own day, but she was not regarding the Old Testament as 'coded'. When she employs the word 'typical' she is

(London, 1979) pp.7, 8. For Horne (1780-1862) a type was 'an example prepared and evidently designed by God to prefigure that future thing.'

⁶³⁴ For example, through E. B. Pusey's 'Lectures on Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament' (1836).

⁶³⁵ David Gunn, *Judges (Blackwell Bible Commentaries)*, (Oxford, 2005), p.301

⁶³⁶ Landow (1979) p.8

using it in the sense of an archetype. She identifies some behaviour or attitude in scripture that is just plain typical of how people have behaved since.

Thus, she is careful to draw a distinction between the popular form of typology which would have identified Abraham as a type of Christ, and her own use of type whereby she was using Abraham as a prefiguration of fallible and sinful men who oppress outcast women. So she states that, she is 'not about to consider the history of Abraham just now in its great, typical character'; it 'is not of Abraham the Seer, the forerunner of the Messiah, that I want to speak, but simply of Abraham as a father, a human and earthly father.'⁶³⁷ Hagar's story is typical in a different way for Butler: 'it is the earliest recorded embodiment in practice of a humanly decreed injustice which has prevailed ever since'.⁶³⁸

As she refers to other types in expounding her outcast theology, Butler draws attention to Biblical passages which she sees referring, not just to the immediate people and events described, but as having a greater significance. The typical acts of Christ, she states, should be the example for all his followers in their attitude towards and treatment of women. The typical tragedy sums up the way women are regarded and treated whenever the sexual double standard is an accepted theory in society. The typical sin or crime of the universe creates the typical victim. The typical outcast provides the first example in Scripture of a 'humanly decreed injustice' which has been repeated throughout history and continues to be enacted in Butler's own day.

⁶³⁷ *The Lady of Shunem* (London, 1894) p.37 See too p. 70, Abraham's behaviour as typical of the discord between the old and new dispensations

⁶³⁸ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.71

Woman's Work and Woman's Culture

Firstly, then, an examination of Butler's use of the 'typical acts of Christ the dangerous leveller'.⁶³⁹ In 1869 Josephine Butler edited *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, which was comprised of a series of essays by women who were to become very influential in the feminist movements of the 19th century.⁶⁴⁰ As noted in Chapter One, Butler was on the committee for every significant reform campaign affecting women's rights. By 1869 she had already been closely involved with a number of female reformers in persuading Cambridge University to open the Higher examinations to girls. Similarly, through her involvement in petitioning for the extension of the franchise and for the Married Women's Property Act, she had come to know many in the Langham Place group who were active in the quest for wider educational and employment opportunities for women.⁶⁴¹ The Langham Place group are justly summed up in Suzanne Rickards phrase as

'highly articulate women proficient in philanthropic work and strategic in their attempts to transform an inequitable social order'.⁶⁴²

The precise circumstances of Butler becoming the editor of this remarkable collection of essays is not stated in the book, but she had already published *The Education and Employment of Women* (1868) and had been the author of the memorial to Cambridge University asking for examinations to 'test and attest' women's abilities.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁹ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.84

⁶⁴⁰ See Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge, 1980) pp.121-129 for the overlap in personnel between feminism and repeal.

⁶⁴¹ For Josephine's continued involvement as a speaker and committee member in the cause of suffrage and women's right to work see E. Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain & Ireland: A Regional Survey* (Abingdon, 2006), pp.16,42

⁶⁴² S. Rickards, 'Victorian Women with Causes: Writing, Religion and Action' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 139-157, p.141

Rebecca Styler points out the ‘gendered’ nature of different genres of literature at that time, and notes that

‘Argument, originality of concept and authority in voice were male prerogatives, epitomized in serious non-fiction prose.’⁶⁴⁴

Thus, this work which Butler edited and introduced was highly unusual in being a factual book largely authored by women, which put forward big ideas and original thinking on topics such as the employment of women and emigration. According to Styler, even John Stuart Mill, whose own book on the subjection of women was published shortly before Butler’s, regretted women’s ‘general “deficiency of originality” in terms of ‘great and luminous ideas’. However, as she makes clear, he believed this was due to lack of education rather than ability.

Butler’s own contribution to the book, however, was original, since she went further than simply crossing the perceived boundary into the world of manly factual argument. Theology too ‘was gendered masculine’, and in the view of others besides the Butlers’ old friend John Ruskin, it was ‘the one dangerous science for women’, and one that they touched ‘profanely’.⁶⁴⁵ Although there is no chapter devoted to discussing the Biblical influence on the role and status of women, Butler boldly crosses another line in using her introductory chapter to put forward theological arguments and pronounce on the relative value of the words of Paul and the actions of Jesus.

Of Jesus she states:

⁶⁴³ *The Education and Employment of Women* (London, 1868); *Memorial on behalf of the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women* (1868). [Held by Cambridge University Library, classmark: UA Grace Book Sigma p.359*]

⁶⁴⁴ Rebecca Styler, *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2010) p.13.

⁶⁴⁵ John Ruskin quoted in J. Melnyk, ‘Women, Writing and the Creation of Theological Cultures’ in J. Melnyk (ed.), *Women’s Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of their Fathers* (London, 1998), p.32

‘Search throughout the Gospel history, and observe his conduct in regard to women, and it will be found that the word liberation expresses, above all others, the act which changed the whole life and character and position of the women dealt with, and which ought to have changed the character of men’s treatment of women from that time forward.’⁶⁴⁶

The roles commonly acceptable for female writers on religious subjects were those of relaying the views of others, testifying to the value of Scripture as a source of examples and warnings, and giving simple instruction on non- controversial matters. On the contrary, Josephine chose to include a sweeping criticism of Paul in her introductory essay, making it clear that the views expressed were her own and not necessarily those of the other contributors.⁶⁴⁷ The fact that she believed it was important to address Paul’s statements about women in this secular book demonstrates that, as she said, both Christians and those who did not profess Christianity based their arguments against increased educational and work experience for women on an appeal to Paul’s teaching. Butler did not hold back from making a point by use of the Bible just because it was a secular book to which she was contributing, and because some of her co-authors may not have wished to associate themselves with her remark.⁶⁴⁸ Nor does she seem to have been afraid that, by autonomously setting forth theological arguments in the introduction, she might deter people from reading further. Butler had rightly grasped that changing the way the Bible was understood was the key factor in opening up greater educational and employment opportunities for women. In common with other women, Butler had to respond to Paul, and the way his words were interpreted, if she wished to defend a woman’s right to preach, teach and have authority over men. She

⁶⁴⁶ *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture* (London, 1869) p.lix

⁶⁴⁷ *ibid* p.lii

⁶⁴⁸ For example, it is clear that, by her own admission, Frances Power Cobbe, friend of Felicia Skene did not have an orthodox faith. See Rickards (1902), pp.74, 75.

also had to respond to the influence of his teaching on the wider question of women's 'nature', and whether men and women occupied separate spheres in life by God's design. Women have responded to Paul with varying amounts of passion, intent on correcting him, or those who used/misused his words. Some women like Catherine Booth, the co-founder of the Salvation Army, drew attention to a rather different strand in Paul's teaching. This is demonstrated by Booth's comments on Paul's letter to the Galatians chapter 3:28:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek... there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”. If this passage does not teach that in the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of Christ's Kingdom, all differences of nation, caste, and sex are abolished, we should like to know what it does teach, and wherefore it was written (see also 1 Cor.7:22)’.⁶⁴⁹

Catherine left her fiancé William in no doubt when she wrote to him:

‘If indeed there is in Christ Jesus neither male nor female... who shall... presume to put my candle which God has lighted, under a bushel?’⁶⁵⁰

Butler does not refer to this verse in *Woman's Work*, but she did quote it in her earlier *Education and Employment of Women*, going on to argue that

‘It has been the tendency of Christianity, gradually and slowly, to break down all unfriendly barriers between races, and to extinguish slavery; and last of all it will — this is our hope — remove disabilities imposed by the stronger portion of society upon the weaker.’⁶⁵¹

‘Every encounter of a woman with Christ recorded in the gospels was liberative for her’, Butler said; but she was aware that not every encounter of a woman with Paul had the same result. Butler's response to Paul was to say – why look to Paul when the supreme example of Christ is clear? As Kristin Wardle Fredrickson has argued, Butler derived feminist beliefs from the Bible, and she was not alone in doing so:

⁶⁴⁹ Catherine Booth, *Female Ministry; or, Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel* (London 1870), p.19

⁶⁵⁰ Quoted in Hattersley (1999) p.71

⁶⁵¹ *The Education and Employment of Women* (Liverpool, 1868) pp.18-19

‘Understanding Butler’s love for the Bible, her conviction that it was the definitive source of moral authority, and her frequent references to its authority in support of feminist causes help elucidate both her feminist convictions and the support she was able to generate for women’s causes’.⁶⁵²

Butler’s criticism of Paul is, rather, a criticism of the way Paul’s teachings have been used since his day. Butler relativises the importance of Paul’s teaching in three ways. Primarily she relativises it by stressing the supremacy of Christ, his teaching and example. Emphasising that, ‘A greater than St. Paul is here but we seem to have forgotten it’, Butler states that ‘my appeal is to Christ, and to Him alone, not to any Church, or traditions...nor yet even to an Apostle’.⁶⁵³ Why stop, Butler says, at ‘the earliest adaptations of the principles announced by Christ, rather than the pure principles themselves’.⁶⁵⁴ Jesus’ ‘typical actions’, she argues, include his treatment of women, and she gives an impressive catalogue of these women over two pages, showing for each one what Jesus liberated her from. For example, the woman taken in adultery is liberated from a one-sided application of the law (John 8:1-11), and another woman is emancipated from the position, which even she accepts, of being a ‘Gentile dog’ (Luke 7:24-30). Secondly, Butler makes clear that Paul is an interpreter of Christ’s teaching, not the originator of it. Paul ‘spoke for the exigencies of a given period, and from the point of view of a man born under limitations of vision and judgement,’ he taught how the principles of Christ were to be carried out in his historical setting, not how they apply to all times and all places. Butler’s contemporaries do not need to hold as necessary ‘the primitive form into which these principles were constrained by the

⁶⁵² Kristine Wardle Frederickson, *Josephine E. Butler and Christianity in the British Victorian Feminist Movement*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Utah, 2008), p.166.

⁶⁵³ *Woman’s Work*, pp.xlviii & .lii

⁶⁵⁴ *ibid* p.xlviii

circumstances of society'.⁶⁵⁵ Thirdly, referring to Paul's words that 'I speak this of permission and not of commandment', Butler makes the point that some of Paul's remarks did not carry the authority given to them by his subsequent interpreters.⁶⁵⁶ Thus, Butler relativises Paul, but in her analysis of the Hagar narrative,⁶⁵⁷ it will be seen that she goes further by criticising his biblical interpretation- though she does suggest an excuse for what she regards as his thoughtless words.

It is Butler's Christocentric focus which stands out compared with her contemporaries who would, indeed, refer to Paul on the question of women, and this is the hermeneutic with which she approaches all scripture. Butler's argument here is consistent with her claim that whilst in Oxford she and George were referring to Christ as 'revolutionary' and the 'Liberator'. Her remark about his being 'a dangerous leveller' fits in with her Republican, anti-slavery rhetoric. Butler would challenge her audience in her published work, and especially in her speeches, with the words, 'What think ye of Christ?'⁶⁵⁸; and she describes George's favourite Scripture verse as being Luke 12:57 – 'Why do ye not of yourselves judge that which is right?'⁶⁵⁹

'The Lovers of the Lost'

The second of Butler's publications which included the theme of the typical acts of Christ was 'The Lovers of the Lost' which was published, shortly after *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, in the *Contemporary Review* in instalments in the Spring of

⁶⁵⁵ *Woman's Work*, p.xlix

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid* p.lii

⁶⁵⁷ See Chapter Eight below.

⁶⁵⁸ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.102; 'Emancipation. As I Learned It', *Storm Bell*, January 1900, pp.254-259; *Social Purity* (London, 1879) in J & S, vol. 3, pp.308-328, p.310

⁶⁵⁹ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.142

1870.⁶⁶⁰ This was Butler's first publication on the topic of outcast women. Butler attests that Mr. Percy Bunting, who was the editor of the *Contemporary Review*, supported repeal; and as Millicent Garrett Fawcett added, 'his wife and their sister-in-law Mrs. Sheldon Amos [were] most staunch'.⁶⁶¹

The first section of 'The Lovers of the Lost' is a salvo against the casting out of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19), described by Butler subsequently as 'the typical tragedy', which is so strikingly powerful and original that perhaps the second part of her article has been overlooked. This part is devoted to a selective historical survey of work with outcast women which takes in the ill-treatment of the early centuries and the subsequent efforts of individual men and women to reach out to fallen women and offer them a place of refuge. This second section of 'Lovers of the Lost' will be examined before discussing the five contemporaries Butler refers to in the article, then finally turning to her exposition of the narrative of the Levite's concubine.

In examining the contributions of some earlier women whom she regarded as 'lovers of the lost', the point made by David Scott, that authors of biography are naturally drawn to subjects with whom they identify, is apposite. It is this aspect of Butler's article that requires attention.⁶⁶² In examining Butler's descriptions of the lives she has chosen and in noting her comments, including Biblical and theological comments, echoes of her own life and the work which she wished to inspire can be clearly seen. As Eliza

⁶⁶⁰ 'The Lovers of the Lost', *Contemporary Review*, vol.13 (Jan-March 1870) pp.16-40 in Jordan & Sharp, vol 1, pp. 93-120

⁶⁶¹ M. G. Fawcett, & E. M. Turner, *Josephine Butler: Her Work and Principles and Their Meaning for the 20th Century* (London, 2002 – reprint of the 1927 edition), p.53.

⁶⁶² D. Scott, 'Josephine Butler and St. Catherine of Siena' in Milbank (2007), pp.51-68, p. 53

Wigham listed American abolitionists,⁶⁶³ so Butler lists those who have been lovers of the lost. They merit regard since various comments that Butler chose to make about previous ‘lovers of the lost’ also relate to her personal experience or to her later selection of those to hold up for emulation.

In fact, Butler’s purpose in writing the piece could be said to be threefold: firstly, to give an insight into the work of previous lovers of the lost as an inspiration to others to follow; secondly, to justify her own work and that of those who decide to follow her lead; and thirdly, perhaps, to chart her own journey towards taking up the cause of the outcast and to point out similar driving forces and motivations at work in the lives of her heroines. Mathers has fruitfully explored Butler’s ‘self-representation’ in the spiritual biographies of rescued women that she published and in some of her other works.⁶⁶⁴ It is the argument of this thesis that, similarly, Butler’s selective historical account of women who engaged in rescue work is also a form of self-representation worth examining.

Thus, Catherine of Siena is mentioned here as one who ‘laboured for the lost of her own sex’.⁶⁶⁵ Butler’s subsequent biography of Catherine has been much discussed as a form of autobiography.⁶⁶⁶ Other forebears that Butler lists have not been examined in the same way, however. Butler may be referring to her own experience in her remark about the importance of the Archbishop’s support at the beginning of a new Christian work,

⁶⁶³ Eliza Wigham, *The Anti-Slavery Cause in America and its Martyrs* (London, 1863). See *Social Purity* (London, 1879) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp.308-328, p.328, for the influence of these martyrs upon Butler.

⁶⁶⁴ Mathers (2006) pp.37-53, pp.43-45

⁶⁶⁵ ‘Lovers’ (1870) pp. 93-120, p.109

⁶⁶⁶ See David Scott, ‘Josephine Butler and St. Catherine of Siena’, in Milbank (2007), pp.51-68; and Pat Starkey, ‘Saints, Virgins and Family Members: Exemplary Bibliographies? Josephine Butler as Biographer’, in Daggars & Neal (2006) pp.135-153

and inwardly contrasting it with the lack of help she ultimately received from the Brownlow Hill Workhouse for her setting up of her House of Mercy.⁶⁶⁷

Butler makes mention of five contemporaries in *Lovers of the Lost*: Cardinal Manning, Bishop Armstrong, T. T. Carter, Rev. William Scudamore and Anna Jameson. The influence of these five respectively upon Butler has not necessarily been explored or reckoned as important. Of interest is the fact that, at this early date, Butler quotes Cardinal Manning's empathy with her cause, demonstrating that their association which was so important to Butler extended over a lengthy period of time.⁶⁶⁸ Bishop Armstrong and T. T. Carter from the Anglican Penitentiary Association were prominent in work with female penitents, and their influence on Butler has been previously noted.⁶⁶⁹ However, it is the less well known Rev. William Edward Scudamore (1813-1881) from whose Biblical interpretation Butler gets her most significant quotation about Jesus attitude to the Magdalene. Scudamore was the Rector of Ditchingham in Norfolk, and responsible for founding a small penitentiary, orphanage and hospital there. Butler prefaces the quotation from him with her own statement that Christ was

‘seen, not once, but again and again, by His marked reception of these women, to give as it were to the world a key-note upon which to tune its voice to the Magdalene to the end of time.’

Quoting Scudamore, she then says:

‘To one such, though an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, He declared himself to be the long-expected Christ, and offered to her the living water which stays the fevered thirst of the world-wearied soul. Another, accused before Him by self-righteous guilt, he saved from present death, and bade ‘go sin no more,’ a

⁶⁶⁷ ‘Lovers’ (1870) p.116. See Jordan (2001), p.75

⁶⁶⁸ ‘Lovers’ (1870) p.103. On her relationship with Manning see A. S. G. Butler (1954), p.167f

⁶⁶⁹ See Jordan (2007), pp. 12-33, p.16f.

third, trembling and weeping at His feet , He defended from harsh blame, accepting her loving, generous deed as a work meet for repentance.’⁶⁷⁰

Following on from this, Butler declares that the Magdalene should have been recognised by a Christian society ‘as having been thrice emphatically presented by Christ Himself, thrice especially commended to all who have any true love for Him’. Thus, the quotation from Scudamore is seen to embody Butler’s fundamental belief that the ‘typical acts of Christ’ towards the Magdalene demonstrate his acceptance of her and are designed to commend her to those who are his followers. Unfortunately, Scudamore does not appear to have received credit from later scholars for the quotation Butler makes use of. Did she use it because she felt that it aptly summed up her existing thoughts, or was it, in fact, due to him that she realised the crucial importance of Jesus’ stance towards the Magdalene as represented in these three scripture passages?

Research reveals that Scudamore was involved in the founding of a House of Mercy at Ditchingham in 1858. A contemporary newspaper article about this occasion shows that Rev. W. J. Strachey preached in the morning ‘on the appropriate text John viii. 11’ – ‘And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.’ Then in the afternoon the Rev. E. Munro preached ‘on the beautifully suggestive words of Zech. !4:7: "But it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light."' His emphasis on hope, not on repentance, would have met with Butler’s approval, as he

‘set forth, with wonderful effect, the value of hope, especially to the penitent, as the great motive power to every upward effort, and pleaded for the multiplication of Houses of Mercy in the land, because they light the Star of Hope to those, who, without them, have no encouragement to repent and return.’⁶⁷¹

⁶⁷⁰ ‘Lovers’ (1870), pp. 93-120, p.96

⁶⁷¹ *Beccles and Bungay Weekly News*, 12 October 1858, p. 4 column 3

Scudamore himself preached the following year at the opening of the House of Mercy and published his sermon on the theme of ‘She hath done what she could’ (Mark 14:8)⁶⁷²

It is noteworthy that, in addition to emphasising the Magdalene ‘thrice especially commended’, Butler also looks more widely at other women whose encounters with Jesus are recorded in the gospels. In the January 1900 edition of the *Storm-Bell*, where she substantially reproduces her typical acts argument from *Women’s Work*, she adds the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-16), using this story of the raising to life of an only son to address mothers who had lost sons in the ongoing Boer war.⁶⁷³

Whether acquaintance with Scudamore’s quotation preceded her own conviction that Jesus acts towards women were ‘typical’, or whether she followed on from Scudamore and looked more widely at Jesus encounters with women and the lessons to be learned, it is not possible to say. However, Scudamore’s sermon was not until 1859 – after the Butlers had left Oxford – and, as previously noted, they had already decided that Jesus was revolutionary. So it is possible that the Butlers came to their conclusions separately from Scudamore and that Josephine chose to quote him to lend authority to her own views or because of his neat turn of phrase.

A further person whose research into ‘The Lovers of the Lost’ shows must have been a significant influence, is Anna Jameson (1794-1860), the writer, art critic and campaigner for women’s rights. Jameson was on the Married Women’s Property

⁶⁷² William Edward Scudamore, *She Hath Done What She Could: A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the House of Mercy at Ditchingham, on S. Michael’s Day, 1859* (London, 1859)

⁶⁷³ ‘Emancipation. As I Learned It’, *Storm Bell*, January 1900, pp.254-259, p.258

Committee of 1855,⁶⁷⁴ which Butler herself was later to join having supported the cause from the beginning.⁶⁷⁵ Jameson reported that she had received a lot of response to her publication *Sisters of Charity*, which indicates its contemporary importance.⁶⁷⁶ The crucial similarity between Butler and Jameson in their starting point can be seen in Jameson's statement about women's rights, that

‘In a free country, and a Christian community, a woman has the rights which belong to her as a human being and as a member of the community, and she has no others.’⁶⁷⁷

It is easy to see why Butler chose the particular quotation from Anna Jameson's *Sisters of Charity*, which stated that it was ‘touching and significant to see how often’ women's charitable works have ‘taken their especial form from some deep domestic sorrow’.

Jameson referenced the example of Angela da Brescia, who became involved in rescue work as a result of her sister dying.⁶⁷⁸ In Butler's case, it was the fatal accident of her daughter, Eva, which she said led her to ‘find some pain keener than my own’, and find a new sense of purpose in visiting women in the Liverpool workhouse.⁶⁷⁹

Jameson's book may also have been an inspiration to Butler to take up the repeal campaign, since Jameson refers to the fact that in recent history there had been three women who had been important in lobbying the government; only one is named but the

⁶⁷⁴ Lydia Murdoch, *Daily Life of Victorian Women* (Santa Barbara, 2014), p.8

⁶⁷⁵ See Jordan (2001), p.88

⁶⁷⁶ Anna Brownell Jameson, *Sisters of Charity, Catholic and Protestant, Abroad and at Home* (London, 1855). This was republished in a new edition four years later as *Sisters of Charity & The Communion of Labour. Two Lectures on the Social Employment of Women by Mrs. Jameson. A New Edition Enlarged and Improved With a Prefatory Letter to the Right Hon. Lord John Russell... On the Present Condition and Requirements of the Women of England* (London, 1859). It is the 1859 edition that will be cited here.

⁶⁷⁷ Jameson (1859) p.77

⁶⁷⁸ *ibid* p.26

⁶⁷⁹ ‘Lovers’ (1870) pp. 93-120, p.111; *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), pp.182-3

other two may well have been identifiable to Butler. Jameson's description of the first, who was 'nobly born and connected', could have been written about Butler:

'She attacked Home Secretaries, and she plagued magistrates; no M.P was safe from her, no Minister of State. Like the woman in Scripture who persecuted the unjust judge, she made herself listened to by her "much speaking," and at length *leavened* the society in which she moved with her own feelings, her own hopes, her own faith.'

The qualities that Jameson commends in her description of Mary Carpenter's campaigning might also have acted as a role model for Butler as she

'carried out into action, and tested by experience, and illustrated by published documents, by well digested facts and eloquent reasoning, the truths which her sister in beneficence had advocated.'⁶⁸⁰

It was certainly true that no one could accuse Butler of lack of practical experience of the type of rescue work which she advocated. Nor could it be said that she did not publish enough or give enough speeches.

Certain of Jameson's ideas put forth in this publication must have resonated with Butler's own experience. Butler had said of her Oxford experience that she was told virtuous women ought to know nothing of 'accepted theories in society'. However, Jameson forcibly attacked what was regarded by some as 'permitted conventional license,' and addressed the sexual double standard as she argued that

'the laws of nature be not less violated than the ordinariness of a pure religion; that in men, dissolute habits are something very different from "strong passions".'⁶⁸¹

Jameson and Butler both justify their right to speak on this issue – Jameson by asserting that she is older and knows the realities of life,⁶⁸² and Butler by citing the fact that she is a mother, and calling her interpretation a 'motherly' interpretation'.⁶⁸³

⁶⁸⁰ Jameson (1859), p.86

⁶⁸¹ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.96; Jameson (1859), p.xxix

Jameson goes on to present an assessment of women's lapses from virtue that is far from conventional, and echoes Butler's statement that economics lay at the root of prostitution:

'We talk of "fallen women;" but for the far greater number there is no *fall*; they just, like blind creatures, walk from the darkness of ignorance into the foulness of sin. They are starving, and they sell themselves for food.'⁶⁸⁴

She argues that 'in women, vices, which are the result of want, misery, and ignorance, are not "lapses from virtue;" and goes on to use one of Butler's own key biblical notions as she states that

'a frailty, or a temptation here and there, is very different from a class of human beings *set apart for destruction* in body and soul.'⁶⁸⁵

Here Jameson employs a biblical expression that is a rendering of the Hebrew word 'cherem' – the sacred ban. It was subsequently often used by Butler, though sometimes rendered as 'devoted to destruction'. When the Israelites were conquering the Promised Land, the victors were commanded not to seize the spoils of war, whether 'a virgin for each man', as the Book of Judges puts it (21:12,33), or the material wealth of the cities they were conquering. These were to be devoted to the LORD – the gold and silver to go into the treasury and all the living creatures to be slaughtered (Judges 6:18f). Things and persons not evil in themselves were required by the LORD to be 'devoted to destruction'. Furthermore, as it was used in, for example, Deuteronomy 7:26, 'cherem' was taken to indicate that those who did not observe the command to set apart for destruction were tainted by whatever they saved:

⁶⁸² Jameson (1859), p.xxix

⁶⁸³ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.74

⁶⁸⁴ Jameson (1859) p.39. See *The Moral Reclaimability of Prostitute* (London, 1870) in Jordan & Sharp, vol 1, pp.121-127, p.125f.

⁶⁸⁵ Jameson (1859) p.xxix

‘Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing [i.e. ‘cherem’]’

According to Scripture God’s attitude was robust:

‘neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you’. (Joshua 7:12)

In her campaign against the CD Acts, Butler drew attention to the fact that one group of women was being used to secure the moral purity of another. One group was being sacrificed to prevent a more widespread danger to all women- both the danger of sexually transmitted disease but also the danger of moral corruption. As she put it,

‘Even good men and Christian ministers echo the belief that unchastity is a “necessity” for man, and that the “priestess of humanity,” the degraded and outcast woman, must continue to the end of time to offer up sacrifices for society, *herself* the victim on the sacrificial altar, her soul, affections, will, immortal spirit, cast, together with her frail and suffering body, into the burning fiery furnace, the Gehenna of the insatiable lust of the male tyrant who rules her destiny here on earth.’⁶⁸⁶

It was in describing this sacrifice of the outcasts, that Butler often referred to ‘the setting apart for destruction... of a vast multitude of women’.⁶⁸⁷ Butler seems to be saying that those who condemn the outcast women are claiming God’s sanction for their behaviour. The outcast women are ‘devoted to destruction’, as if they were under a sacred ban and God was requiring their destruction. Jameson and Butler seem to be using the expression to emphasise the deliberate and irrevocable nature of assigning women to be outcasts. Its usage in this context may also carry a note of irony, since, in their opinion, this is being done by men but not at the command of God.

⁶⁸⁶ *The Hour Before the Dawn* (London, 1876) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp.243-308, p.281

⁶⁸⁷ *Lady of Shunem* (1894), p.82; *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1876), pp.243-308, p.284

The second vivid and challenging Old Testament image that Butler used concerning this treatment of outcast women was that they were like sacrificial sheep to the slaughter –

‘thousands of women, of young girls, of mere children, are continually dragged and driven to the fashionable markets of lust, and there slain like sheep appointed for slaughter.’⁶⁸⁸

Another section from Jameson is worth quoting in full because of its overlap with

Butler’s ideas:

‘If it be – as she is told it is – an absolute necessity in a Christian community that there should exist a class of women set apart for sacrifice, that every year some thousands of young girls should be consigned to the den of the Minotaur on the plea of public safety, no wonder that womanhood should sink low in the sight of man, and manhood in the estimation of woman!’⁶⁸⁹

Butler echoed themes from this, although she replaced the idea that women were sacrificed to the Minotaur and its Greek reference point, with the Biblical allusion that they were being sacrificed to the Canaanite god, Moloch, which the God of Israel condemned.⁶⁹⁰

Once again Butler had been influenced by the Abolitionist movement, since Moloch was used in anti-slavery rhetoric when referring to the sacrifice of human beings to slavery. Notably, the American abolitionist, Angelina Grimke in her famous *Appeal to Christian Women of the South* (1836) used the expression ‘Moloch’.⁶⁹¹ Grimke argued that Christians were the main pillars of the Temple to Mammon and Moloch that was slavery in the South. Grimke further used an example of Christ’s behaviour and applied it to anti-slavery. Saying that Christ did not take away the stone from the tomb of

⁶⁸⁸ *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1876) pp.243-308, p.261

⁶⁸⁹ Jameson (1859), p.xxviii

⁶⁹⁰ See *The Duty of Women in Relation to our Great Social Evil* (Carlisle, 1870) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.124-132, p.131

⁶⁹¹ Angelina Emily Grimke, *Appeal to Christian Women of the South* (New York, 1836), p.15. Online at <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abesaegat.html> *Appeal to Christian Women of the South* (accessed 20/12/2013)

Lazarus himself but rather commanded ‘Take ye away the stone’, Grimke declared to the women she was addressing that it is ‘our business to take away the stone from the mouth of the tomb of slavery’; it is then, she says, that Christ can bring to life the corpse of the slave.⁶⁹²

In this way, the command to remove the stone becomes a typical act of Christ in Grimke’s rhetoric. People must respond to the command of Christ and remove the obstacles so that the dead can hear Christ’s life-giving voice.

In her tribute to Catherine Booth, Butler used precisely the same typical act of Christ and line of argument when she claimed that the Salvation Army were reaching the ‘perishing populations in our great cities’ who are ‘buried, batted down as it were, under the stony pressure of the wretched material circumstances of their lives’.⁶⁹³ The Salvationists were the example she gave of ‘the hands’ of Christ’s servants, ‘bravely’ lifting and carting away the tombstone so that, ‘the light of heaven and the resurrection voice can reach the buried souls beneath’. It is also significant that in the same context, she quoted Hugh Price Hughes’s declaration that he had never known a hungry man to respond to the gospel, and refers to the willingness of the SA to try new methods as she endorses the principle of “solving in working”.⁶⁹⁴

So in the use of very telling biblical imagery to describe the fate of the outcast, it can be seen that Butler may have been influenced by the rhetoric of Anna Jameson, but in adapting it for her own purposes she was more influenced by the language of the Bible and the anti-slavery movement as typified by Grimke.

⁶⁹² Grimke (1836) p.28

⁶⁹³ ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890) pp.639-654, p.647

⁶⁹⁴ *ibid*

Were these women then worthless, Josephine demanded to know? She could not believe that was so. Because, for Butler, a woman, even an outcast woman, was made in the image of God, and no one, nor anything, could take that status, that worth from her. Men might call her worthless, but they did not regard the woman as God did.⁶⁹⁵ She described them as diamonds in the dust,⁶⁹⁶ who bore ‘the impress of the Divine image.’⁶⁹⁷ Josephine Butler powerfully employed her interpretation of Scripture as a strategy of resistance and a counter-reading to that given by society. She begged admission to the bridewell of the Liverpool workhouse in order to visit the destitute women there.⁶⁹⁸ ‘Is there no hope for us?’ was the question voiced by outcast women. ‘You are women and a woman is always a beautiful thing’, was Butler’s simple but profound reply.⁶⁹⁹

As Jane Jordan rightly explains, the whole emphasis in the House of Rest set up by the Butlers was on a place of refuge where the outcast was treated with respect, valued by God and by the Butlers.⁷⁰⁰ Similarly, Alison Milbank observes that Josephine

‘spoke of Jesus to the women she made friends with, not so much to bring them to repentance as to reveal to them their value in God’s eyes.’⁷⁰¹

If not worthless, then the question still remained as to whether the outcasts were, in fact, worth *less* than men and other women? Was it expedient to sacrifice them to save others? In order to understand Butler’s rebuttal of this suggestion it is necessary now to examine her exposition of one of the most challenging passages of Scripture. If, for

⁶⁹⁵ *Salvation Army in Switzerland* (1883) P.5

⁶⁹⁶ ‘Memories’, *Storm-Bell*, No.23 June (1900) pp.307-311, p.310

⁶⁹⁷ *The Duty of Women* (1870) pp.124-132, p.132

⁶⁹⁸ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) pp.183, 184

⁶⁹⁹ ‘Memories’, *Storm-Bell*, No.23 June (1900) pp.307-311, 309

⁷⁰⁰ Jordan.(2007), pp. 12-33, p. 24 and whole chapter

⁷⁰¹ Milbank (2007) pp. 1-11, p.3

Butler, the Typical Acts of Jesus equated with acceptance of all women and a liberative encounter with Jesus for them all, then the Typical Tragedy epitomised that too. But it is also, specifically, both a stark example of the sexual double standard and of Butler's innovative use of Scripture to argue against it.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TYPICAL TRAGEDY

Introduction

This chapter examines Butler's exposition of that most challenging passage of Scripture, Judges 19, the story of the Levite's concubine. This grim incident in which a woman is cast out by her man to be raped by some of the men of the town and to be found dead on the threshold of the house when he opens the door to continue on his journey the next day, was cited by Elizabeth Cady Stanton as an instance of

'where women have been thrown to the mob, like a bone to dogs, . . . and women suffer to-day from these lessons of contempt'⁷⁰²

Rather than the outcast being brought into the house, the exact opposite happens with a calculating and cold disregard for her fate. This story is named by Butler as 'the typical tragedy', and again Butler's use of 'typical' in her title shows that she is making a wide polemic case out of this specific story. As far as Butler is concerned,

'Throughout the world's long night the fate of the Levite's concubine has been outcast woman's fate, cast forth in answer to the clamorous cries of insatiable human lusts, and then left to perish in the outer darkness'.⁷⁰³

This chapter will demonstrate how when faced with this shocking example of the sexual double standard in Scripture, Butler made innovative use of the Bible in two ways. Firstly, she used it to argue against the values and actions represented by the 'typical tragedy'. Secondly, through choosing in her interpretation 'to speculate on the horizons of possibilities rather than collecting the bouquets of received wisdom', to

⁷⁰² Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York, 1895. Reprinted Seattle, 1974), Part 2 p.16

⁷⁰³ 'The Lovers of the Lost', *Contemporary Review*, vol.13 (Jan-March 1870) pp.16-40 in J & S, vol 1, pp. 93-120, p.93f

borrow an expression from Ricoeur, she powerfully opens ‘up a horizon which escapes from the closure of discourse’.⁷⁰⁴ Two scholarly articles on Butler’s interpretation of the Levite’s concubine narrative will be discussed and it will be demonstrated that Butler used this passage on more than the two occasions cited in the articles. Thus, the comparison of her interpretation of this passage at various times in her life will be extended, and further significant differences will be noted and reasons suggested for them. It will be demonstrated that incidents in Butler’s own life would appear to have shaped and given colour to her interpretation. A suggestive case will be made for the influence of some major contemporary pieces of art on Butler’s picture of the scene outside the closed door. Finally, Butler’s theme of the worth of a woman will be discussed in the light of this chapter and the previous one.

Texts of Terror

Firstly, however, in moving from Butler’s use of Jesus as a positive example with regard to treatment of women to her use of the Levite’s concubine and Hagar narratives as negative examples, it is necessary to examine the problematic nature of these biblical texts and how they have been received, before beginning a consideration of Butler’s contribution to the exposition of these narratives and themes.

The Levite’s concubine (Judges 19) is found dead by her master after being abused throughout the night by men of the city, yet Thomas Morgan (d.1743), pronounced that ‘her ravishers simply gave her “too much of what she had liked but too well before”⁷⁰⁵ In contrast, the contemporary theologian Elsa Tamez labels this treatment torture. This

⁷⁰⁴ Paul Ricoeur, quoted in Patricia Demers, *Women as Interpreters of the Bible* (New York, 1992) p. 2

⁷⁰⁵ Thomas Morgan, cited in Gunn (2005) p.276

is a clear example of the strong feeling that these texts have provoked in the course of this debate and highlights the difficulty that commentators face in reconciling themselves to the presence of these texts of terror in Scripture.

It is not only the passages themselves that are problematic but also the history of their interpretation. As examples cited by David Gunn make clear, commentators justified the treatment of the woman by emphasising that she was an immoral woman or they considered that her fate was preferable to the original demand that the man should be brought out to be the sexual prey of the townsmen.⁷⁰⁶ The Bible commentator Joseph Hall gave his verdict that ‘She had voluntarily exposed herself to lust, now is exposed forcibly. Adultery was her sin; and it was her death.’ Gunn remarks that ‘the usually compassionate Joseph Hall, hardly falters in his enthusiasm for the man’s noble character’.⁷⁰⁷

According to Gunn, Hall was ‘widely read in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’. Whether Butler had read any such remarks about this passage is unknown, though it would seem likely that she would have turned to any available commentaries in search of illumination as to how this dreadful story was to be understood as Scripture.

In the 21st Century it is not surprising to find books on biblical interpretation entitled *Woman, Violence and the Bible*.⁷⁰⁸ However, when Phyllis Tribble published *Texts of Terror* in 1984 both the title and the contents of the work were striking. Indeed, as John L. Thompson comments, the title was ‘provocative’. Tribble focused on ‘tales of terror with women as victims’ in the form of the narratives of Hagar, Tamar, an unnamed

⁷⁰⁶ David Gunn, *Judges (Blackwell Bible Commentaries)*, (Oxford, 2005), pp. 249ff.

⁷⁰⁷ Quoted in Gunn (2005) p. 254

⁷⁰⁸ Marla Selvidge, *Woman, Violence and the Bible* (New York, 1996), p.38

concubine, and Jephthah's daughter, 'women who were, in turn, driven into the desert; raped; tortured to death; and sacrificially slain'.⁷⁰⁹ .

Thompson following Tribble draws attention to the fact that in these texts God is implicated in the misogyny:

'the God of the Bible seems to not only allow cruelty against women but even to abet with a silence that looks all too much like complicity'.⁷¹⁰

Whereas Tribble was seeking to reject the patriarchy of the Bible without rejecting the Bible itself, other writers find no place for these texts as Scripture and believe they only model abusive treatment of women. As Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan comments, perhaps rather sarcastically,

'How intriguing that a so-called "good book," one used as the basis of denominational authority and for slogans to get people through the day is so filled with violence- a violence orchestrated by divine and human hands.'⁷¹¹

Thompson's point is well made when he says that Tribble's title has 'taken on a life of its own'.⁷¹² By highlighting instances of apparent misogyny in the text of Scripture, Tribble's work led the way for others to look afresh at the texts and ask related questions about it exhibiting or endorsing mistreatment of any other groups or individuals. Tribble, herself, sees feminism as 'a critique of culture in light of misogyny' rather than something with a 'narrow focus on women'. She believes that 'this critique affects the

⁷⁰⁹ John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (New York, 2001) p.3. The narratives are Hagar – Genesis 16:1-16; 21:9-21; Tamar – 2 Samuel 13:1-22; An unnamed woman (usually referred to as the Levite's concubine) – Judges 19:1-30; Jephthah's daughter – Judges 11: 29-40.

⁷¹⁰ Thompson (2001) p.3

⁷¹¹, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible* (Leiden, 2003), p.3

⁷¹² Thompson (2003) p.3

issues of race and class, psychology, ecology, and human sexuality.’⁷¹³ ‘Texts of Terror’ have become a genre within Biblical interpretation and within the Scriptures themselves. The very expression ‘text of terror’ has become a well-known phrase or saying not needing explanation by overt reference to its origins.⁷¹⁴ Work like Tribble’s has led to feminist and other scholars employing a hermeneutic of suspicion in approaching the text whereby the text and its authors and editors are interrogated for any misogynist bias.⁷¹⁵

Thus, biblical language and imagery, such as expressions like ‘whoring after other gods’ as a metaphor for Israel’s apostasy in the Old Testament, have been regarded as deeply problematic by modern readers because of the negative associations of sin with female sexual promiscuity. Similarly in writing about the book of Revelation, Marla Selvidge states that:

‘It is clear, even for the casual reader, that the writer of the book of Revelation objectifies woman as the enemy.’

Selvidge argues that the image of the whore of Babylon being treated violently by God in the book of Revelation (e.g. 17:5, 19: 2) is deeply problematic for women. She suggests that

‘Its influence on our culture may have indirectly promoted and institutionalised violence, terrorism, and pornography.’⁷¹⁶

Tribble’s conviction that ‘hermeneutics encompasses...application from past to present’, and that there are consequences for the individual or religious community today, is seen

⁷¹³ Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, 1978), p.7

⁷¹⁴ Deryn Guest, *When Deborah met Jael: Lesbian Biblical Hermeneutics* (London, 2005) p. 164

⁷¹⁵ As Thompson (2001), p.5, observes ‘The feminist application of this sort of suspicion is compactly stated by the title of J. Cheryl Exum’s essay, ‘Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?’; see G. A. Yee (ed.), *Judges and Method* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 65-90.

⁷¹⁶ Marla J. Selvidge, *Woman, Violence and the Bible* (New York, 1996), pp. 114, 115.

to be true.⁷¹⁷ Similarly true is Alice Bach's point that biblical characters have a 'life' in the mind of the reader so the impact of their stories carries on into the present resonating with other characters and circumstances.⁷¹⁸ The field of Reception History of the Bible is providing fascinating insights into the afterlife of characters and themes from the Bible and how they have re-emerged and been expressed and interpreted in culture through literature, music and the arts.⁷¹⁹

Feminist biblical criticism reads the Bible from the point of view of women, including the women in the text, which is exactly what Butler will be seen to have done in reading as the voice of the outcast. It will be demonstrated that Butler exercised a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding not only misogynistic interpretation of Scripture but 'sex-bias' in the drawing up of the canon. She addressed, too, the apparent silence of God in the texts of terror.

Scholarly articles by Jenny Dagers⁷²⁰ and Marion Ann Taylor⁷²¹ address Butler's exposition of Judges 19, and both note that, against the earlier suggestion that Tribble was 'the first to see the value of applying biblical stories to situations of ongoing abuse'⁷²², that Butler in fact makes similar use of use of the Levite's concubine narrative 'which she lifts from obscurity having never heard preacher or writer comment

⁷¹⁷ Tribble (1984), p.7

⁷¹⁸ A. Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge, 1997), p.32

⁷¹⁹ See, e.g. C. Joynes & C. Rowland (eds.) *From the Margins 2: Women of the New Testament and Their Afterlives* (Sheffield, 2009)

⁷²⁰ Dagers, J., 'Women and Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain within the Authorised Discourse', *Open Theology*, 1 (2007) <http://www.opentheology.org/> (accessed 01/09/2009)

⁷²¹ Marion Ann Taylor, ' "Cold Dead Hands Upon our Threshold": Josephine Butler's Reading of the Story of the Levite's Concubine, Judges 19-21' in Heskett, Randall and Brian P. Irwin (eds.), *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God Through Historically Dissimilar Traditions* (London, 2010), pp.259-273

⁷²² Taylor & Weir (2006) p.400

on it'.⁷²³ Butler, predating Tribble by a century, raised the same concerns as Tribble and challenged prevailing Christian thought and biblical exposition in a similar way. Unlike Tribble, Butler did not limit herself to Old Testament texts when giving her interpretation. Rather, she brought them into conversation with New Testament texts and her conviction that Christ is the Liberator, and thus gave a self-consciously Christian interpretation.

The Levite's Concubine

Butler's 1898 article 'Dead Hands Upon the Threshold', forms one version of her powerful, if harrowing, polemic about the Levite's concubine. John L. Thompson's description of Tribble's title, *Texts of Terror*, as 'provocative' applies equally well to Butler's chosen title.⁷²⁴ 'Dead Hands upon the Threshold' is memorable and given the concubine's subsequent dismemberment by her master and delivery to the twelve tribes of Israel, it seems likely that Butler was making play on words here. Any 20th or 21st century feminist would be hard put to come up with a more suggestive title that would incorporate more levels of meaning. As Dana Nolan Fewell says of the dismembered woman:

'Now it is her broken body that speaks to all Israel... Her message is that she has been abandoned and betrayed by all the men with whom she has come into contact.'⁷²⁵

Marion Ann Taylor's article on Butler's interpretation of this passage provides a careful and insightful analysis of the content and interpretative strategies Butler employed. In demonstrating the development in Butler's theological perspective on the Levite's

⁷²³ Dagers (2007); Taylor (2010) pp.259-273, pp.267,268

⁷²⁴ John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (Oxford, 2001), p.3

⁷²⁵ Danna Nolan Fewell, 'Judges' in C.A. Newsom, and S. H. Ringe, (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, 1992), pp.73-82, p.81; Gunn (2005) p.75

concubine through comparison of the version published in 1870 as the *Duty of Women*, with the 1898 version, and in relating Butler's exposition of Judges 19 to the concerns of modern feminist biblical scholars including Tribble, Taylor's analysis is an important milestone in the study of Butler's biblical interpretation.

As Taylor states, Butler,

'fuses the horizons of the original story and the present, reading Judg 19 as a story about abused, voiceless, and powerless women throughout history.'⁷²⁶

However, there are some factors which Taylor does not take into consideration which have a significant bearing on a fuller appreciation of the extraordinary power and significance of Butler's exposition. Firstly, in common with Daggers and others who have realised the extraordinary achievement of Butler's Biblical interpretation and been keen to draw it to the attention of a wider audience, Taylor tends to equate Butler's use of the word 'outcast' with 'prostitute'.⁷²⁷ In fact, Butler uses the expression more broadly to take in any woman cast out by an individual or society for a perceived transgression of the moral standards to which they held her accountable – indeed to any 'abused, voiceless, and powerless' woman.⁷²⁸

In the light of this it is necessary to question Taylor's statement that Butler 'does... assume that the concubine was a prostitute'.⁷²⁹ This statement may be Taylor's deduction from the fact that Butler says that the fate of the Levite's concubine 'has been outcast woman's fate', but as already stated, for Butler outcast did not necessarily mean prostitute. On the contrary, she is careful to describe the Levite's concubine in *The Duty*

⁷²⁶ Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.265

⁷²⁷ *ibid* p.265

⁷²⁸ Hence Hagar the wife or concubine is a 'typical outcast'. *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.71

⁷²⁹ Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.265

of *Women* (1740) as ‘the woman, his companion’, and ‘the helpless woman’, and in ‘Dead Hands Upon the Threshold’ as ‘a “damsel,” his wife, or concubine’, and as ‘his companion, the woman’.⁷³⁰ Thus she avoids any suggestion that the woman is a prostitute and any discussion of Judges 19:2 ‘[his concubine] played the whore against him’. It is true that in *Duty of Women*, Butler expresses the view that the woman’s own sins had something to do with her death. Again, however, prostitution is not suggested, and Butler’s emphasis is on the ‘outraged corpse, crushed with the heaped and pitiless weight of the sins of others’, as well as ‘her own sins’. Thus for Butler the ‘Typical tragedy’ referenced in the Biblical narrative is ‘outcast woman’s fate’, which Butler does not deny may have involved sin on the part of the woman, but attributes to the im/moral reasoning which lead to the woman being cast out, and to the complacency of ‘her master’. Butler simultaneously challenges her contemporaries, both male and female, who have been content to leave outcast woman ‘to perish in the outer darkness... [whilst] the door is too heavily barred for her to open’.⁷³¹

Secondly, Taylor says she is examining Butler’s ‘published writings’ of her exposition of the Levite’s Concubine. However, in addition to the *The Duty of Women* and ‘Dead Hands on the Threshold’ that Taylor discusses, there is a third published version in ‘The Lovers of the Lost’, other aspects of which have been discussed above.⁷³² Although substantial sections of ‘Lovers of the Lost’ are reproduced verbatim in *The Duty of Women*, there is also much additional material in the earlier work and a couple of phrases in *Duty of Women* that she did not employ in the first piece. It may also be

⁷³⁰See *The Duty of Women* (1870) pp.124-132, p.127 ; ‘Dead Hands Upon the Threshold’, *Storm-Bell* (Dec 1898), pp.111-115, p.111

⁷³¹ *The Duty of Women* (1870) pp.124-132, p.128

⁷³² Taylor does say that Butler ‘often returned’ to this story, however ‘The Lovers of the Lost’ version is not cited.

relevant that the first and third versions were written solely for publication, whereas the *Duty of Women*, was an address given to motivate the assembled women to expend further effort in the cause of the outcast.

One unusual and noteworthy feature of *Duty* is the language Butler uses to describe the women she elsewhere consistently refers to as outcast women or simply outcasts. Here Butler uses ‘slavery’, ‘fallen woman’, ‘the woman who was a sinner’, ‘outlaw’ and ‘outcast woman’ all in the same passage. Perhaps this was for rhetorical effect as she sought to use layer upon layer of language to show how these women were labelled by society. A further unique feature of this address is that in seeking to inspire ‘zeal for the war against’ evil, Butler uses the word ‘harlotry’ in her description of that ‘evil’, as in ‘State supervision of harlotry’,⁷³³ and as she challenges her audience:

‘I believe we are called, in this our day, to labour for the abolition of harlotry – that great and soul-devouring evil, that huge Typical Sin, which comprises all other sins, all crimes, all miseries and all woes, within its bosom.’⁷³⁴

Generally Butler avoids the word harlot or harlotry, preferring to refer to ‘vice’ when it is in the context of state regulation, and to ‘outcast women’ when speaking of the women involved. ‘Playing the harlot’ is a powerful metaphor for Israel’s idolatry in the Old Testament (e.g. Jer. 2:20, Ezek. 16:41) and a graphic image in the Book of Revelation (17:5). It has caused controversy since women and men have grown uncomfortable with these images that stereotype sin as sexual and women as snares.⁷³⁵

The negative images of women as sexual transgressors in the Bible help to explain how the double standard held sway in Victorian society.⁷³⁶ It would seem that after referring

⁷³³ *The Duty of Women* (1870) pp.124-132, p.125

⁷³⁴ *ibid* p.130

⁷³⁵ See e.g. Maria Selvidge, *Woman, Violence and the Bible*, (New York, 1996)

⁷³⁶ See Loades (2001), p.104

in ringing biblical language to this type of immorality in this initial phase of her campaign, Butler changed tack and held back from language that might have the effect of focusing attention on the women concerned, and encouraging a stereotypical view of them as temptresses. What is more, in the context of the campaign against the prostitution set up for the British army in India, she criticised Alfred Dyer's use of the expression 'brazen harlots' and suggested to her friends, the Priestmans, that he lacked sympathy for the women.⁷³⁷ Furthermore, she even adds a magisterial footnote when publishing Kate Bushnell's account of how she came to relate to such a woman just as she would to 'any other sinner'. Butler is most insistent: 'I would go further than this. I would reply, "Just as I would to any other *woman*."' ⁷³⁸

There are some important aspects of 'Lovers of the Lost' that are not included in *Duty of Women* or 'Dead Hands'. One of these is Butler's reference to 'a movement among the sleepers, a haunting consciousness of somewhat leaning heavily against our door'.⁷³⁹ It is probable that this was inspired by her experience of the potato famine in Ireland since, in a pamphlet that she published on the Irish Question, Butler wrote that during the famine, people could wake to find in their doorway the corpse of someone who had sought shelter. She states that a wagon was sent round each early morning to collect such bodies which were then put through a trapdoor into a communal grave.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁷ Letter from Josephine E Butler to the Misses Priestman, 27th February 1888, in Jordan and Sharp, vol. 5, pp.109-111, p.110

⁷³⁸ *The Present Aspect of the Abolitionist Cause in Relation to British India: A Letter to My Friends* (London, 1893) in Jordan and Sharp, vol. 5 pp.172-.201, p.201 note 3

⁷³⁹ 'The Lovers of the Lost', *Contemporary Review*, vol.13 (Jan-March 1870) pp.16-40 in Jordan & Sharp, vol 1, pp. 93-120, p.94

⁷⁴⁰ *Our Christianity Tested by the Irish Question* (London, 1887), p.49

Reading Butler's poignant account of these experiences it seems likely that she was drawn to be more empathetic with the woman and more robust in her judgement of those who failed to save her because of her experiences of the famine in Ireland.

As Butler continues, in 'Lovers of the Lost', to write of those who have woken up to the fact that 'someone' is 'leaning heavily against [their] door', she says that

'Some, thank God, have started from their beds and gone forth ... to find the prostrate body, wherein yet perchance is life, and have uttered, not ineffectually, the words, "Up, let us be going".'⁷⁴¹

This is a quite extraordinary piece of exposition in which Butler has again 'fused horizons', bringing together her memories of the famine which seem to have played a part in the spiritual crisis she went through in her late teens,⁷⁴² and her contemporary concern for outcasts and the 'corpse-like fall' of the dying concubine of Judges 19.

The knowledge that the theme of the woman dying on the threshold had such a personal resonance for Butler, indicates why her charge to the sleepers in her expositions on the Levite's concubine is so impassioned. It adds depth of meaning to her statement that 'We have slept long and soundly... What if the judge... should require of us an account of our protectorship?' It opens up the possibility that Butler is making a personal admission of guilt for failure to save the woman, rather than just issuing a rallying cry.⁷⁴³

Pre-Raphaelite Art and Butler's interpretation

Another aspect of Butler's life that should be taken into account when analysing her biblical exposition, is her knowledge of art. Butler was an acute observer of people and

⁷⁴¹ 'Lovers' (1870) pp.93-120, p.94

⁷⁴² For an account of this crisis see Jordan, (2001), p.18

⁷⁴³ 'Lovers' (1870) pp.93-120, p.94

scenes with vivid powers of description and clearly had a well-developed visual imagination.⁷⁴⁴

The Butlers had various connections with Pre-Raphaelite artists, including a close association with Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁷⁴⁵ George discussed Pre-Raphaelite art in his published reviews.⁷⁴⁶ The theme of outcast women was a popular one with mid-nineteenth century artists, and, in the light of this it seems highly likely that Josephine's knowledge of contemporary art influenced her interpretation of this passage.

Taylor rightly points out the powerful way in which Butler 'brings Jesus into the story of the rape of the Levite's concubine', by weaving in the story of 'the woman of the city who was a sinner' (Luke 7:36-50), the story of the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8: 40-48), and Revelation 3:20 – 'Behold I stand at the door, and knock'.⁷⁴⁷ An aspect of Butler's reference to Luke 7, in this context, also merits comment. She suggests that

'More outcast women than we know, may 'have kissed secretly those blessed feet, even in the darkness outside the door;' ... more outcast women 'certainly than Simon thinks, while...shuddering at the thought that any guest of his should suffer the approach of so vile a thing'⁷⁴⁸

and here she may well have been referencing a work by Dante Gabriel Rossetti – *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee* (1858).

Rossetti pictures, not the penitent Magdalene at the feet of Jesus, but a strong and sensuous woman with the power to make her own choices, being drawn, or called compellingly, by Christ. Convinced that Mary Magdalene had a 'strong will, with

⁷⁴⁴ See, for example, *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (1883) p.16

⁷⁴⁵ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.91. See Jordan (2001), p.41

⁷⁴⁶ 'Tennyson's *Maud*', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Vol. 52 Issue 309 (1855) pp.264-273

⁷⁴⁷ Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.268

⁷⁴⁸ 'Lovers' (1870) pp.93-120, p.95

powerful faculties of every kind, working for good or evil’, art critic, Anna Jameson had criticised earlier portrayals of Mary Magdalene, saying that artists might have captured ‘the sorrow, the hope, the devotion: but who has given us the character?’ In particular she complained that

‘the feeble, girlish, commonplace ... women ... used as models by artists, ... ill represent the enthusiastic convert, or the majestic patroness.’⁷⁴⁹

Rosetti’s portrayal stands in marked contrast to those described by Jameson. Rachel Nicholls, in her analysis of Rosetti’s drawing, argues that by neither objectifying nor patronising the woman, the work alters ‘our perception of the unknown sinner who wept at the feet of Jesus’.⁷⁵⁰ According to Nicholls, Rosetti was working on this piece from 1853-1859 and Josephine states that she and George visited Rosetti’s studio during this period as well as George being consulted by Rosetti about his translations of Dante.⁷⁵¹ So it is possible that the Butlers saw it in his studio or discussed it with their mutual friend John Ruskin who said ‘That Magdalene is magnificent to my mind, in every way’ and wanted to buy it.⁷⁵²

Given the Butler’s interest in art and access to libraries, Butler may well have read Anna Jameson’s art criticism, too. She clearly had her own strong views on the insipid portrayal of women in religious paintings, as an outburst in her Oxford drawing room demonstrated.⁷⁵³ If, as seems more than possible, Butler knew of Rosetti’s drawing, this ‘determined and honoured Magdalene’ may have stayed with her as with Ruskin. It

⁷⁴⁹ Anna Jameson, quoted in Styler (2010) p.21

⁷⁵⁰ Rachel Nicholls, ‘“What Kind of Woman is This?” Reading Luke 7:36-50 in the Light of Dante Rosetti’s Drawing *Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee*, 1853-59’ in C. Joynes & C. Rowland (eds.), *From the Margins 2: Women of the New Testament and Their Afterlives* (Sheffield, 2009) pp. 114-128, p.125

⁷⁵¹ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), pp.91,92. See Jordan (2001), p.41f

⁷⁵² Quoted in Nicholls (2009) pp.114-128, p.120

⁷⁵³ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.99

might well have played into her thinking about the outcast and influenced her exposition of texts, notably in her juxtaposition of the Levite's concubine with the outcast woman frowned upon by Simon.

In addition, two famous paintings by Holman Hunt – *The Light of the World* and *The Awakening Conscience* (1853-1855) – may also have been in Josephine Butler's mind in her description of Jesus and the abused woman meeting at the door. Referring to the mid-century private and public debates regarding the sexual conduct of unmarried women and men, Jan Marsh suggests that

‘Holman Hunt's pictures offer thoughtful and complex interventions... beyond the conventional condemnation of the fallen or outcast woman' [and] ‘interrogate male sexual roles and responsibilities with uncharacteristic boldness, challenging the double standard and inviting viewers to participate in a moral discussion.’⁷⁵⁴

The Light of the World, which was the most viewed image in Victorian Britain, shows Christ outside in the darkness knocking on a door which, with no exterior handle, can only be opened from within. *The Awakening Conscience* has become regarded as a classic example of Victorian ‘secular pictorial imagery of the fallen woman’ and ‘the iconic image of the perceived Victorian obsession with the problem of the fallen woman.’⁷⁵⁵ All the details in the painting tell the story as the young kept woman starts up from her lover's knee: the cat has caught a bird under the chair, the tapestry is unravelling, and a soiled glove is discarded on the floor. Yet in ‘The Awakening Conscience’, or as it was alternatively entitled, ‘The Awakened Conscience’, the open doorway represents the possibility of redemption.

⁷⁵⁴ Jan Marsh, ‘Men, Virtue and Valor’ in Katharine Lochnan & Carol Jacobi (eds.), *Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Vision* (Ontario, 2009) pp.97-112 , p. 97f. Hunt's patrons, Thomas and Martha Combe lived in Oxford where Thomas ran the university press and they attended the same church as Felicia Skene. Whether the Butler's knew them or Hunt personally is unknown.

⁷⁵⁵Jan Marsh (2009) pp.97-112 p.101

This painting has been described as Hunt's secular 'sermon in a photograph' and was conceived as a companion to *The Light of the World* 'which depicts 'enlightenment from religious teaching'.⁷⁵⁶ *The Awakening Conscience* was intended to depict 'a real live example of the principle in practice', 'as if the lantern-bearing Christ had knocked on the door of the fallen woman to redeem her from her sin'.⁷⁵⁷

An outline of the factors that led up to Hunt painting *The Awakening Conscience*, demonstrates the ways in which both he and Josephine Butler were influenced by the same factors as they became interested in the fate of the outcast, moving, as they did, in the same social and artistic circles in Oxford, and beyond, where this topic was being debated. According to Jan Marsh, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood followed the story of 'little Emily' and her companion, Martha, who becomes a prostitute in Charles Dickens novel *David Copperfield*, as instalments were published, in 1849-50. Coinciding with the publication of chs.41-43 of *David Copperfield*, William Rathbone Greg published an article on prostitution, which he called 'the great social vice of the age'.⁷⁵⁸ Greg protested against the treatment of prostitutes:

'they are outcasts, pariahs, lepers. Their touch, even in the extremity of suffering, is shaken off as if it were pollution and disease. It is discreditable to a woman even to be supposed to know of their existence.'

On the other hand, Greg said,

'The swindler may repent, the drunkard may reform, society...welcomes back with joy and generous forgetfulness the lost sheep and the prodigal son.'⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁶ Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, 'The Light of the World: Mission and Message', in Lochnan & Jacobi (2009) p.113-134p.118

⁷⁵⁷ Marsh (2009) pp.97-112, p.101. See too Mane –Wheoki (2009) pp.113-134, p.117f, for discussion of Jesus' words in John 10:9, 'I am the door'.

⁷⁵⁸ Marsh (2009) pp.97-112, p.102

⁷⁵⁹ W. R. Greg, 'Prostitution', in *Westminster & Foreign Quarterly Review*, 53:2 (July 1850) pp.448-506, p.450; 454f

According to Marsh, Hunt was planning to paint a ‘material counterpart’ to *The Light of the World* in a picture of Peggotty’s rescue of Emily ‘when she had become an outcast’. However, it was the novel, *Ruth*, by Mrs. Gaskell, published in January 1853, which precipitated the production of *The Awakening Conscience*, with its suggestion of escape for the outcast.⁷⁶⁰ As demonstrated earlier, *Ruth* seems to have played an important part in Butler’s experience and in the development of her own thinking, as evidenced by her dissension from the assessment of the novel by Oxford men.⁷⁶¹

Whether George Butler or Josephine were amongst those who made *The Light of the World* the most viewed image of its day, or whether they saw *The Light of the World* and *The Awakening Conscience* when they were hung side by side in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition is not known. However, it is clear that the painting and the verse ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock’ became inextricably linked in the minds of those who knew of the painting or had viewed it. Thus when Butler reminds her readers of Jesus’s promise ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock’, and added that ‘His head is filled with the dew and His locks with the drops of the night’,⁷⁶² it seems to be a very clear reference to Holman Hunt’s painting: reviewers had commented on the dew on Christ’s clothes – a dew symbolic of blessing, or a dew symbolic of death.⁷⁶³

As outlined above, *The Light of the World* was already linked with the topical debate about fallen women and the sexual behaviour of men. In bringing the Levite’s

⁷⁶⁰ Marsh (2009) pp.97-112, p.102 quoting Hunt, W. Holman, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 2 vols. (London, 1913) vol.2 p.430. For a discussion of the impact of *Ruth* on Butler, see above, Chapter Three

⁷⁶¹ See above, Chapter Three

⁷⁶² ‘Lovers’, pp. 93-120, p.95

⁷⁶³ ‘New Society of Painters in Water Colours’, *The Athenaeum: Journal of English and Foreign Literature, Science and Fine Arts*, No.1384, May 6 (London, 1854), pp.561-562, p.561

concubine and Jesus together on the doorstep, Butler conjures up a new and riveting picture. 'It may be', she declares,

'that at that same closed door these two, the slain woman and the Saviour, have met many a time while we slept and knew it not; it may be that those cold faint hands, falling upon the threshold, groping hopelessly, have stolen in the darkness some virtue from His garment's hem'.⁷⁶⁴

As Jordan has noted, Butler saw Mary Magdalene not only as an outcast accepted by Jesus but also as the first witness of the resurrection (John 20:10-18),⁷⁶⁵ one commanded by Christ to go and tell others the good news. So it is possible that the idea of Mary meeting Christ in the garden early on the morning of the resurrection and being commanded not to hold him, is another strand in Butler's description of the woman falling at the feet of Jesus whose 'head is filled with dew'.⁷⁶⁶

Taylor is right in asserting that in response to

'the poignant theological question: Where is God in the midst of this horrific story? Butler answers, Jesus is there at the door with the concubine'.⁷⁶⁷

The point cannot be made too strongly that Butler's perspective on the closed door and the Jesus on the threshold knocking was unique. As Taylor notes, Tribble too points 'to the symbolic significance of the word "door" in the Judges story'.⁷⁶⁸ The words 'at the door' carry such a weight of meaning, but especially so for Butler with her experience of walking side by side with the outcast. For Tribble, perhaps foregrounding the way this narrative subverts the Israelite obligation to keep a welcome in the gates, 'the door or doorway marks the boundary between hospitality and hostility'.⁷⁶⁹ However, from

⁷⁶⁴ 'Lovers', pp. 93-120, p.95

⁷⁶⁵ Jordan (2007), pp. 12-33, p.28

⁷⁶⁶ Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.268

⁷⁶⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁶⁹ *ibid* p.77

Butler's perspective of identification with the outcast – walking in and out of brothels and the cellars of Liverpool's docklands, having the door to the bridewell in the workhouse slammed behind her by a nervous warder,⁷⁷⁰ finally agreeing, when the neighbours complained of the stench, to send a syphilitic woman from her House of Mercy to a place where the words 'pest house' were written over the last doorway she would ever pass through,⁷⁷¹ watching George meet outcast women at the front door, offer them his arm and escort them to their room 'like any other lady',⁷⁷² knowing that the drawing-rooms of London were open to the male clients of prostitutes despite their 'damning sin' of hypocrisy⁷⁷³ – the woman cast out was not just being denied hospitality. The door through which the outcast was cast by hypocritical men and 'careless women' became 'the portal for her of a life of misery and shame', and crossing that threshold was one step towards an inevitable death.⁷⁷⁴

Furthermore, what the woman in Judges 19 had experienced which had led up to her expulsion would not have been described by Butler as 'hospitality'. Butler says, the woman had grown accustomed to the curt commands given to her by her 'lord and master', who

'Careless of, or stupidly denying to himself the inevitable tragic end of his companion... gives her his orders which she has ever too abjectly obeyed.'⁷⁷⁵

As Dana Nolan Fewell puts it

⁷⁷⁰ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Fanny Smyttan, 27 Feb 1867

⁷⁷¹ SA, 'Rebecca Jarrett', cited in Jordan (2011), p.334 n.20

⁷⁷² Letter from Josephine E. Butler Fanny Forsaith, April 1904

⁷⁷³ *The Moral Reclaimability of Prostitutes* (London, 1870) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 1, pp.121-127, p.124

⁷⁷⁴ *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1876) pp.243-308, p.281

⁷⁷⁵ 'Dead Hands', (1898), pp. 111-115, p.112

‘The woman, in the end, is caught between her father’s house and her husband’s. No other house offers refuge to her. Trapped on the threshold, unable to move, she is torn apart and displaced by the men of Israel.’⁷⁷⁶

In the face of this, Butler was saying that Jesus is beside the woman, outside the locked door with no handle to turn to get back in. Far from being the one who is casting her out, Jesus is in fact, to use an expression employed by Republican Butler, *solidaire* with the outcast woman. Jesus the revolutionary takes His stance in solidarity with the outcast in the public theology of Josephine Butler and all this in the 19th century.

Daggers importantly, emphasises that Butler was

‘confident in her own capacity for biblical interpretation’ and was not deterred from proclaiming her independent interpretation of this passage despite not being ‘authorised’ to be engaged in ‘religious discourse.’⁷⁷⁷

The weight of increasing experience of the significance of doors and doorways must surely have been part of what drove Butler to be so bold and to give a more incisive critique of the double standard in the last version of her exposition.

Hugh Price Hughes called for ‘audacity’,⁷⁷⁸ and Josephine Butler practised it, in choosing to expound this text which is surely one of the most shocking in the Bible, particularly at a time when its subject matter rendered it an unsuitable text for almost anyone else to tackle. Equally shocking would have been that she saw no problem in doing this herself without guidance, and claiming her reading as a prophetic word of judgement for her society and her times. A final striking feature of Butler’s exposition of the Levite’s Concubine, is the way in which she uses it to remind her audience of the

⁷⁷⁶ Fewell (1992), pp.73-82, p.77

⁷⁷⁷ Jenny Daggers, ‘Women and Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain within the Authorised Discourse’, *Open Theology*, 1 (2007). Online <http://www.opentheology.org/> (accessed 01/09/2009)

⁷⁷⁸C. Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity* (Cardiff, 1999), p.68

coming judgement of God, which most of them would have believed was going to take place. Although, as was seen in Chapter Four, Butler seems to have drawn back from asserting that there would be eternal punishment, and certainly would not preach ‘terror’ to the outcasts, she, nevertheless, reminds those who ‘have slept too long’ that God may judge them by showing them the ‘mercy’ they have shown to the outcast. Butler’s words really drive home her message:

‘they are there still. Her dead hands are stretched forth over the earth in dreadful appeal, prophetic of judgment’.⁷⁷⁹

Butler is clearly threatening God’s judgment against those who abuse a woman either in the case of the concubine or in the case of the prostitute or outcast woman.

In the same vein, but much more subversive and dramatic, is the picture she conjures up in the later work of the dead hands of the women being raised in praise to God in heaven. This carries with it overtones of her earlier comments that ‘hypocrisy’ may be the one sin that will ban men from heaven as ‘the harlots enter the kingdom, before them’.⁷⁸⁰

In referring to the sacrifice of outcast women and in her expositions of Judges 19, Butler is linking the story with her own concerns about the fate of the women of the subjected districts, and their treatment at the hands of the army, the police and the magistrates. Linked to her train of thought here is an image which she employs in the *Hour Before the Dawn* alongside a reference to women being ‘dragged and driven to the fashionable markets of lust, and there slain like sheep appointed for slaughter’. Butler goes on to write that men

⁷⁷⁹ ‘Dead Hands’ (1899), pp. 111-115, p.115

⁷⁸⁰ *Moral Reclaimability* (1870) pp.121-127, p.124

‘seize upon and devour her in their wickedness, until every trace of the divine stamp of womanhood is effaced’... (as though she was) ‘trampled to death by the marching over her prostrate form of a company of soldiers. Though no one singly seems to kill, yet collectively they kill her, and each one is guilty.’⁷⁸¹

It is the unassailable belief in the value and worth of each individual person which may be said to be John’s Grey’s chief legacy to his daughter, and it is demonstrated by her insertion of Jesus beside the woman of Judges 19. In this way, Butler not only, as Taylor says, ‘tried to redeem the horrors of the story by placing Jesus with the victim in her suffering and death’, but also fundamentally testified to the intrinsic value of every soul, ‘a value to be measured only by the price paid for its redemption’.⁷⁸² John Grey too had used monetary reference points when making points about the value of a person. According to Butler, he once wrote that “You cannot treat men and women exactly as you do one pound bank-notes, to be used or rejected as you think proper”.⁷⁸³ This was written in a letter

‘to the Times, when that paper was advocating some ill-considered changes, beneficial to one class, but leaving out of account a residue of humble folk upon whom they would entail great suffering’.⁷⁸⁴

Butler’s biographer, Hay Cooper, says that this summed up the attitude of Josephine Butler, too, and it is significant that Butler’s next statement about her father is this:

‘In the cause of any maltreated or neglected creature he was uncompromising to the last, and when brought into opposition with the perpetrators of any social injustice he became an enemy to be feared.’⁷⁸⁵

These memories of John’s language may have played into Butler’s own choice of phrase or simile. Notably, she utilises the parable of the Lost Coin in conjunction with

⁷⁸¹ *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1876) pp.243-308, p.261

⁷⁸² Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.269; *Switzerland* (1883) p.4f

⁷⁸³ *Memoir of John Grey* (Edinburgh, 1869), p.47

⁷⁸⁴ *Memoir of John Grey* (1869), pp.47, 48. Here John would have been referencing the mistrust shown towards paper bank notes when they first began to replace gold coins.

⁷⁸⁵ L. Hay-Cooper (1922), p.17.

the Levite's Concubine, but with her own unique twist as she asserts that outcast woman is the lost coin and 'she should be searched for diligently... she should be pitied, and only her sin abhorred'. It may also be significant that the one searching in the parable is a woman and therefore perhaps bridges the gap between the text and the women in her audience that Butler is trying to motivate to go after the lost.

Taylor, who notes Butler's reference to substitutionary atonement in the later exposition, refers to Phyllis Trible also finding meaning in the concubine's 'Christ-like death'.⁷⁸⁶ This is one of several echoes between the thought of Trible and Butler: Trible and Butler both employ the parable of the Lost Coin in their feminist biblical interpretation. Saying that she has 'accented what [she considers] neglected themes and counter literature', Trible uses the expression 'the lost coin' for the 'treasures', old and new, which she has recovered 'in the household of faith' by using feminist hermeneutics. For Trible the lost coin is the glimmer of hope represented by feminine language and imagery in the Hebrew Scriptures amongst a preponderance of masculine language and imagery.⁷⁸⁷ As the examination of Butler's exposition of the Levite's concubine narrative and the Hagar narrative discussed below in Chapter Eight will show, Butler similarly foregrounded neglected themes seeking to encourage pursuit of the lost coin and, since this was one hundred years before Trible, her biblical interpretation is of peculiar importance.

In conclusion, Butler's remark in a letter to 'Dear Mama' (her mother-in-law) at the outset of her repeal campaign makes clear how she viewed her work as she wrote that she had been going 'about on sort of a preaching tour'. Her early speeches – such as *The*

⁷⁸⁶ Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.270

⁷⁸⁷ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, 1978), pp.200-202

Duty of Women (1870) – may have been given ‘only to women’, and ‘mostly in the Quakers’ meeting houses or a Church Schoolroom’ but it would seem that what Butler gave them was a sermon – made up of independent biblical interpretation, with illustrations from Church history, and appeals to the intellect as well as the emotions, concluding with a call to practical action on behalf of the outcast.⁷⁸⁸

Butler refers to one address as ‘my Croydon sermon’ and clearly, from the very beginning of her public work on behalf of the outcast, she was a powerful preacher.⁷⁸⁹ Mama was from a Quaker background and was to prove supportive of Butler’s work, but it was the fire and passion of Whittier and Wesley that the ladies were hearing not the calm and gentle form of Quakerism that Butler professed to admire.⁷⁹⁰

If Mama was kept rather in the dark to begin with, George and Charles Birrell, Butler’s cousin-in-law, had no doubts about what they were witnessing. In introducing Josephine to her audience in Liverpool, George referred to Joan of Arc and

‘heroines, who fought in the battle field, like Deborah of old, when Barak would not take the field without the prophetess.’

He told her audience that when Josephine had spoken on a previous occasion ‘the common people heard her gladly’. Birrell used an even clearer Biblical allusion when he told the audience that Christ spoke to the lost woman in her words.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁸ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Mrs. George Butler, 3 January 1870, in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 1, pp.91-92, p.91

⁷⁸⁹ Letter from Josephine E. Butler to Mr. Ryley en route to Scotland, Monday 10? July 1871

⁷⁹⁰ Jordan (2001) pp.43, 113

⁷⁹¹ *Great Meeting of Working Men*. Speech Given by Josephine E. Butler to the Working Men’s Meeting, Richmond Hall, Liverpool, Friday 18 March 1870, in Jordan & Sharp, vol.2, pp.67-76, pp.68 & 76

When comparing *The Duty of Women* and 'Dead Hands Upon the Threshold', Taylor suggests that, in her opinion, Butler's exposition of Judges 19-21 in 'Dead Hands' is 'more profound', basing this on the fact that Butler explores what happens before and after the concubine's death, and 'addresses the underlying assumptions of the Levite and his host regarding women's nature, place, and value'.⁷⁹² There is a good case for saying this, but there are so many strikingly original elements in all three versions that it is difficult to privilege one. 'Dead Hands' derives a lot of its force from Butler's greater knowledge, by this stage of her life, of the fate of the outcast. A further poignant addition to Butler's work on the theme of the Levite's concubine was with a fourth article she published only a few months after 'Dead Hands' and under the same title. In it she related the recent death of a Burmese woman in India who had been raped by a number of soldiers within sight of a guard tower, but for whose death no one had been found guilty.⁷⁹³ Referring to the Levite's concubine narrative in Judges 19, and to the capture of other women after the ensuing battle (ch20) Dana Nolan Fewell perceptively remarks that

'Neither the Levite's wife nor the women who are subsequently murdered or abducted and raped are allowed speech. The world of Israel has become a place where women have neither voice nor choice.'⁷⁹⁴

Butler was similarly outraged by the 'Christ and Belial' union in India, where the missionaries were claiming to preach the Gospel, and the supposedly 'Christian' imperial power was enforcing state-regulated prostitution.⁷⁹⁵ However, by repeatedly

⁷⁹² Taylor, (2010), pp.259-273, p.269

⁷⁹³ 'Dead Hands on the Threshold', *Storm-Bell*, (July 1899), pp.202-206

⁷⁹⁴ Fewell (1992), pp.73-82, pp.76-77

⁷⁹⁵ *The Revival and Extension of the Abolitionist Cause. A Letter to the Members of the Ladies' National Association*, (London, 1887), in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 5, pp.13-64, p.14

expounding this passage and describing the woman's fate as typical Butler gave the outcast, of whatever nationality, a voice.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TYPICAL SIN OR CRIME OF THE UNIVERSE

Introduction

Whereas the ‘typical acts’ of Christ were set forth by Butler as a role model for her audience, her discourses on the ‘typical sin or crime’, the ‘typical tragedy’ and the ‘typical outcast’, all centre around treatment of women that Butler deplors, and the Biblical arguments and impassioned pleas that she makes as she states the causes and traces the course of the mistreatment of outcast women. The expressions ‘typical sin’ or ‘typical crime’ of the universe, seem to be synonymous in Butler’s usage.⁷⁹⁶

It is prostitution itself to which Butler applies the expression, ‘typical sin’. However, she immediately qualifies this by stating that, in the campaign to end prostitution, the first target of her campaign is the ending of state regulated prostitution:

‘at the very entrance upon ...the war against harlotry, - we feel the absolute necessity of bringing to naught this fatal legislation.’⁷⁹⁷

For her use of ‘the typical sin’, the publication which will be considered is *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* [henceforward referred to as *Voice*].⁷⁹⁸ This book is an edited version of a series of speeches she gave in French in France, Switzerland and Italy in 1874, whilst campaigning against the state regulation of prostitution, and it was

⁷⁹⁶ See *The Duty of Women* (1870) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.124-132, p.130

⁷⁹⁷ *ibid* p.130

⁷⁹⁸ *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness. Being her first appeal made in 1874-5, to continental nations against the system of regulated vice. Now first translated into English by Osmund Airy* (Bristol, 1913). Originally published as *Une Voix dans le Désert*, 1884, in J & S, vol. 1, pp.128-155

first published in French under the title *Une Voix dans le Désert*. In it she refers to looking forward to the future day when God ‘shall destroy the empire of sin in this world’, and goes on to say that in the meantime ‘we are bold to attack the Giant, the typical sin of the earth’.⁷⁹⁹

It is clear that from the very beginning of this campaign she saw herself – and presented herself – as a female John the Baptist:

‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness! A woman’s voice, and she cries among the multitude in “this vast wilderness of men”.’⁸⁰⁰

This chapter will examine aspects of the way in which Butler applied to herself the scriptural designation, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness!’, which was first used in the prophecy of Isaiah (40:3) and then applied to John the Baptist (Matt. 3:3).

Butler’s self-conscious emulation of Isaiah and John the Baptist as they addressed the leaders of the nation and the lawmakers will be analysed, together with what she meant by ‘wilderness’. So, too, will the critical factors in her self-understanding – the reasons for her close identification with the outcast women of France and its power as a motivating force; her understanding and awareness of the French cultural context; her convictions about the necessity of proclaiming Scripture in a way that was publicly relevant and challenged the powerful; and, above all, perhaps, the undeniable significance of her belief that she was one whom the spirit of God had called to be a female prophet in a wilderness of men, declaring God’s message to the here and now rather than speaking of things to come.

Firstly, it is necessary to contextualise the speeches that she made and to show how they fit into her developing campaign. According to James Stuart, who wrote the

⁷⁹⁹ *Voice* (1913), pp.128-155, p.150.

⁸⁰⁰ *ibid* p.131

introduction to *Voice*, ‘the earlier part’ of 1874 was the time when the repeal cause ‘reached its period of greatest depression.’⁸⁰¹ A general election had led to many of the friends of repeal losing their seats, and a conference on the Continent proposed extending the CD Acts to other European countries, arguing that they were already accepted in Britain. Stuart explained that Butler ‘determined, like a wise general, to carry the war into the enemy’s camp,’ and decided to take the fight to the Continent.⁸⁰²

Stuart wrote in glowing terms of this tour as ‘a turning point in the campaign’, ‘an awakening’ and ‘the proclamation of a new gospel.’⁸⁰³ He had heard some of the speeches in person, but from the published record it does not appear that Butler’s gospel was ‘new’. Once again, Butler points to the ‘typical acts’ of Jesus, as she reminds her audience of the woman taken in adultery, and suggests that her audience are like the scribes and the Pharisees whom Jesus challenges about their own morality, since they ‘cast stones at the woman of immoral life’ but ‘pay the highest worldly honour to the man who sins with her’.⁸⁰⁴ It is the argument of this thesis that in, contrast to Stuart’s suggestion that Butler appeared in these speeches as the herald of ‘a new gospel’, she was, in fact, requiring her audience to follow the teaching and example of Jesus as revealed in Scripture. However, she was a radically different herald who was, as she said herself, tuned to a different keynote within it.⁸⁰⁵

St Lazare Informs Her Voice

Butler’s language in *Voice* is dramatic, which may demonstrate that she was in tune with the character of her French audiences. Equally, it may be expressive of the

⁸⁰¹ ‘Introduction’, *Voice* (1913), pp. 128-155, p.128

⁸⁰² *ibid* p.129

⁸⁰³ *ibid* p.130

⁸⁰⁴ *ibid* p.140

⁸⁰⁵ ‘Lovers’ (1870) pp. 93-120, p.96

profound effect on her of learning at firsthand about the state regulation of prostitution in France, and the deep need she felt to be the voice of the outcast in this context. On her return from this speaking tour she collapsed into months of prostration and darkness,⁸⁰⁶ and it is necessary now to look at what it was that so affected her.

The issue of being the voice of the outcast reverberates throughout the information Butler chooses to give her readers about what she discovered in France – whether it is her own account or publishing that of others. Her encounter with Le Coeur, whereby she learned, not only of the practical outworking of the power of the Bureau of Morals, but also felt personally uncomfortable, sums up her sense of the self-assured control he exercised over women.⁸⁰⁷ Highly formative, too, was her visit to the Saint Lazare prison to find out what life was like for the imprisoned women who ‘were of all grades, from the murderess down to the innocent girl whose only offence was that of being homeless and wandering about.’⁸⁰⁸ According to her sources, ten thousand women passed through the prison each year, and though her account paints a striking picture of how wretched the existence of the women and girls was, it is significant that her intention seems to have been to spare her readers ‘further details of this horrible place’.⁸⁰⁹

Butler paid tribute to Pauline de Grandpre who, ‘for the love of Christ... elected to make her abode’ in an apartment in the prison. According to Butler, Grandpre explored the prison, visiting ‘the outer darkness’ of ‘les oubliettes’, the ‘places of forgetfulness’

⁸⁰⁶ See Jordan (2001) pp.171-175

⁸⁰⁷ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) pp.72, 73

⁸⁰⁸ ‘Brief Recollections of My Fellow-workers. No. III: Pauline de Grandpre’, *The Storm-Bell*, No. 12, February (1899) pp.137-141, p.137

⁸⁰⁹ ‘Grandpre’ (1899) pp.137-141, p.138

deep underground, and followed the sound of banging to find workmen burying the skeletons of women and girls beneath the floor.⁸¹⁰

What Butler tells her reader of her own experience includes longing to speak to the silent inmates, and of battering on the door of this ‘whole world of misery’ and not being heard.⁸¹¹ Her whole description of the system for regulating prostitution in France emphasises the powerlessness of the women and the corruption of the officials. Even more disturbing is her account of visiting a rescue home for prostituted children and finding many children as young as five.⁸¹² It is notable that this voice crying in the wilderness was so horrified by what she saw that she was unable to speak of some of what she had witnessed in St. Lazare.⁸¹³ Glen Petrie says some of the inmates went insane.⁸¹⁴ Butler experienced a profound period of darkness on her return to Britain during which interestingly, what she wanted was to hear was how those fighting for the freedom of the slaves coped when they had not yet achieved their aim. Also noteworthy, though overlooked, is the fact that, Butler carried on visiting St. Lazare.⁸¹⁵

Of course, there would have been an historical sequence to Butler’s discoveries and reflection on them. Some of the discoveries cited here may have happened after her *Voice* tour. However, this is one of those rare cases where the precise sequence of events is not as important as what Butler’s relating of them shows about the impact on

⁸¹⁰ ‘Grandpre’ (1899) pp.137-141, p.138

⁸¹¹ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), pp.78,80

⁸¹² Petrie (1971), p.182.

⁸¹³ See e.g. Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Joseph Edmondson, n.d. [c. Mid April 1875] cited in Jordan (2011), p.173. See also Petrie (1971) pp.182-183

⁸¹⁴ Petrie (1971) p.181. Other visitors documented the horror of girls kept in cages at night lest they corrupt each other. For a description of the conditions at St Lazare based on a contemporary investigation carried out by French politician, Yves Guyot (1843-1928), see Ann Loades, *Feminist Theology: Voices from the Past* (Oxford, 2001), p.137

⁸¹⁵ Jordan (2001) p.172; ‘Grandpre’ (1899) pp.137-141, p.138

her. They show, not just what she knew about St. Lazare, but how she felt, and they hint at why she may have been unable to speak of some of her discoveries. Furthermore, they inform an understanding of how she saw and experienced her role as the ‘Voice Crying in the Wilderness’. She longed to speak to and for the outcast. She was unable to speak to the women and proclaim deliverance, but subsequently she did this in her impassioned speeches and attacked those she held responsible.

But it needs to be recognised that, for Butler, prophetic action was as significant as prophetic utterance. Part of her self-understanding as the voice of the outcast, ‘the voice crying in the wilderness’, undoubtedly involved symbolic, prophetic acts that she enacted either consciously or otherwise. She identified as typical of her European crusade her experience of battering the gates of St. Lazare prison whilst claiming what she believed was God’s promise, that He knew her works and her little strength but there was a door which ‘no man can shut’.⁸¹⁶ For Butler, this event was surely prophetic and typical – an act of public theology, whether the gate keeper or anyone else saw it that way or not.

John the Baptist

Butler stated that John the Baptist’s role was to prepare the way of the Lord – to bring about a time of repentance before the first coming of Christ. Now, she says, it is the time to ask God for other prophets and prophetesses to prepare the way for Christ’s second coming: God will raise up seers.⁸¹⁷ Butler was clear about the fact that, as well as demanding that individuals reconsider their attitude to the double standard, she was

⁸¹⁶ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.80

⁸¹⁷ *Prophets and Prophetesses* (Newcastle, 1898)

also directly challenging the political powers. She noted that John only received stern, and, ultimately, violent, opposition when he challenged the rulers and powerful in the shape of King Herod.

She saw her role in her *Voice* campaign as precisely this. Her challenge was made directly to the law makers in the words of Isaiah 10:1:

“Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right of the poor of my people.”⁸¹⁸

Many years after her *Voice* tour, Butler drew attention to the robust nature of John’s prophecy again when she criticised missionaries in India for seeking the spread of the Christian faith whilst condoning the state regulation of prostitution.

‘Possibly an element of sternness, of John the Baptist’s spirit, may have been lacking in some of the missionaries themselves’ ... [But the] ‘holy principles of the Christian religion will never be taught with success until the Christ and Belial union of the past is utterly abandoned.’

She concluded in a forceful, prophetic manner by declaring,

‘I believe that we are called to take a prominent part in the purifying of our nation’s name in distant parts of the world, and in the open and indignant repudiation of her sins.’⁸¹⁹

This was a conventional utilisation of John the Baptist. However, her earlier usage of the concept of the ghost of John the Baptist in encouraging young women to speak out about prostitution,⁸²⁰ and her portrayal of herself as another John in *Voice*,⁸²¹ constitute a fascinating, original and very feminist strand in the afterlife of this prophet.

⁸¹⁸ *Voice* (1913), pp. 128-155, p.148

⁸¹⁹ *The Revival and Extension of the Abolitionist Cause* (London, 1887) in Jordan & Sharp, vol.5, pp.13-64, p.15

⁸²⁰ *Switzerland* (1883) p.205. See above, Chapter Four: Shifts in Strategy

⁸²¹ *Voice* (1913), pp.128-155, p.131

Wilderness

Mathers notes that ‘wilderness is one of the most potent symbols of Christianity’: it is central to the experience of the children of Israel during their forty years of wandering after the Exodus; it is used powerfully by prophets like Isaiah, from whom the original quotation is taken, and John the Baptist, to whom that quotation is later applied; and it is, for Jesus, the place of temptation and struggle against Satan.⁸²² Another biblical wilderness experience that Butler may also have had in mind was that of Ishmael as recorded in Genesis 21:17. Cast out into the wilderness by Abraham and Sarah, with his mother, Hagar, Ishmael is close to death, and is another voice crying in the wilderness – *une voix dans le désert*. His voice or cry is mentioned twice in this verse. Notably, in the French Douay Bible, God has heard *la voix de l’enfant*.⁸²³

As well as these biblical points of reference, Butler’s use of the word ‘wilderness’ has a rich background and application in a number of thinkers and writers who were important to her, and in her family history. In her biography of Pastor John Frédéric Oberlin she quoted Oberlin’s assessment that he was working in a tangled wilderness, and later added her own observation that roses had been made to bloom there in the moral wilderness.⁸²⁴

The expression ‘dans le désert’ may have carried with it special connotations for Butler because of her Huguenot heritage. Her mother’s forebears and their co-religionists had lived in ‘le désert’, and regarded it as like the time the Israelites spent in the wilderness

⁸²² Helen Mathers, “‘Tis Dishonour Done to *Me*”: Self-Representation in the Writings of Josephine Butler’ in Dagers and Neal (2006) pp.37-53, p.46. See also Hester Jones, ‘Josephine Butler “The Still Voice of Silence”’: Prophets and Prostitutes’, in Milbank (2007), pp.69-88,

⁸²³ See below, Chapter Eight for a discussion of Butler’s exposition of this passage.

⁸²⁴ *Life of Jean Frédéric Oberlin* (1882) p.119. See above, Chapter Four: Pastor Oberlin

after their escape from slavery and persecution in Egypt.⁸²⁵ Thus it is possible that Butler's self-identification as 'Une voix dans le désert' may have had personal significance whereby she saw herself as following in the footsteps of her French Huguenot ancestors, as well those of Isaiah and John the Baptist, in once again risking persecution by challenging the religious assumptions of the powerful majority in the name of God and in pursuit of the repentance and righteousness which she held to be pleasing to Him.⁸²⁶

'The Wilderness of Men'

Mathers suggests that, by 'wilderness', Butler meant 'the vast and hideous oppression' of women under state regulated prostitution in cities like Paris and Geneva.⁸²⁷ This is entirely accurate in identifying Butler's target. However, Butler's usage here carries with it more specific resonances: the wilderness is specifically "this vast wilderness of men" [italics mine]⁸²⁸ Thus, provocatively, Butler states that men are the vast wilderness in which she is the lone woman crying aloud.

Butler employs the expression 'this vast wilderness of men' using quotation marks but without attributing the quotation. Given that her original speeches were in French it seems likely that she was referencing a remark of Stendahl and the strand of debate it was in.⁸²⁹ In the French original of *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* (1913) – *Une Voix dans le Désert* (1875) the expression is 'ce vaste désert d'hommes'.⁸³⁰

⁸²⁵ On her Huguenot background see A. S. G. Butler (1954), p.150

⁸²⁶ I am grateful to Pierre Berthoud of L'Institute Jean Calvin in Aix-en-Provence for allowing me to discuss with him both this theory and Butler's interest in Pastor Oberlin.

⁸²⁷ Mathers (2006) pp.37-53, p.46

⁸²⁸ *Voice* (1913), pp.128-155, p.131

⁸²⁹ Stendhal was the pseudonym of Marie-Henri Beyle (1783-1842)

⁸³⁰ *Une Voix dans le Désert*, Deuxieme Edition Neuchatel (1876) p.3
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54691653> (accessed 16/12/2013)

According to the scholar Jack D. Johnson, Stendahl had utilised the expression in calling for ‘le grand peinture des temps modernes’, (‘the great painter of modern times’) in contrast to too many paintings of ‘antique subjects in antique dress’.⁸³¹ This would chime in with George Butler’s stated views, as expressed, for example, in his review of Alfred Tennyson’s poem ‘Maud’ where George writes approvingly of a work by the painter John Everett Millais and its ‘truthfulness’.⁸³²

Johnson states that the poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) took up Stendhal’s idea, though in the quotation that Johnson cites, Baudelaire renders the expression slightly differently, as he ‘uses and italicizes the phrase, “le grand désert d’hommes”’.⁸³³ If, indeed, Butler and her audience made the connection with Baudelaire, this would have been an even more apt quotation with which to begin an address on contemporary French society and prostitution. Baudelaire’s poetry, and its themes of prostitution and life in the fast growing city, conjure up the Parisian world. Baudelaire wrote:

‘There is an invincible taste for prostitution in the heart of man, and it’s this which creates his horror of solitude. – He wants to be ‘two’.⁸³⁴

His reference to ‘the solitary walker’ in the crowd in his poetry is also apt.⁸³⁵ Russell Goulbourne discusses the influence of this theme in his introduction to his translation of

⁸³¹ Jack D. Johnson, *The King’s Crown: Essays on XVIIIth Century and XIXth Century Literature, Art and History honouring Basil J. Guy*. (Leuven, 2005), pp.167-178

⁸³² George Butler, ‘Tennyson’s *Maud*’, *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, Vol. 52 Issue 309 (1855) pp.264-273, p.266 . The article is anonymous and has been attributed by, to Charles Kingsley. [Walter E. Houghton (ed.) *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, (Toronto, 1972), 429] But see *Recollections of George Butler* (Bristol, 1892), p.122

⁸³³ Jack D. Johnson (2005) p.175. See Charles Baudelaire, ‘Les Foules’ in *Le Spleen de Paris* (Paris, 1869), a posthumous collection of his prose poems.

⁸³⁴ Quoted in Rosemary Lloyd (ed.) *Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire* (Chicago, 1986) p.xii

⁸³⁵ Baudelaire, ‘Les Foules’ (1869)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*.⁸³⁶ Goulbourne notes that Baudelaire was influenced by Rousseau's theme and counterpointed it in his own work by reflecting on the solitary walker in the city, rather than in the countryside.⁸³⁷ Butler is really innovative here. Her allusion in a wilderness of men may well encompass the prostitute and any woman walking alone at night, who, under French law, could be imprisoned on the assumption that she must be a prostitute, but not working in state-licensed premises. Additionally, in the context of prophecy, the solitary walker may reference Isaiah's prophecy, which is echoed or fulfilled by John the Baptist – 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His path in the wilderness' (Matt. 3:3). If, as Butler's rhetoric seems to suggest, she is the solitary voice or walker, then she is drawing a parallel between her own work and calling and that of Isaiah and John as a prophet of the Lord. She may also be asserting her right to walk as a lone woman in the 'wilderness of men' without being accorded outcast status.

If Butler's quotation is a conscious echo of Stendahl or Baudelaire, this would suggest that whilst she was drawing her ideas from the Bible, she was taking care to apply them in a culturally relevant way and to use language that might grab the attention of her audience. Furthermore, in the context of her next words it seems likely that she was also demonstrating her knowledge of French culture and intellectual debate. Given that whilst on this tour she visited Victor Hugo, and given George's knowledge of art and literature and interaction with those who were producing it, it does not seem surprising that Josephine, perhaps with George's help, ensured a powerful opening to her address.

⁸³⁶ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* translated by Russell Goulbourne, (Oxford, 2011) Introduction p.ix-xxviii

⁸³⁷ Rousseau (2011) p.27

It would seem that Butler's reference to Baudelaire right at the beginning of her speech and her book shows, not just that she was making connections between his work and her own, but that she was sending an intentional and self-conscious message to her audience that she was smart and culturally relevant. She goes on to say that some have listened to her then changed their mind, arguing that

‘it is so easy for a woman to carry away her audience by an appeal to sentiment. The subject which she is rash enough to discuss must be examined from every side.’⁸³⁸

By quoting from the gritty and gutsy poetry of Baudelaire, Butler has pre-empted the accusation of mere sentimentality. She is signifying to her audience that she may be a woman but she is going to speak of the real Paris, of the far-from-poetic realities of prostitution, sexually transmitted disease, and imprisonment. She believed herself to be called by God to be a prophetic voice like John the Baptist, who challenged corruption in the society of his day and told the powerful to repent and behold God manifesting Himself in the wilderness.

As well as referencing Baudelaire's work, it is highly likely that Butler was also aware of the statement by another prominent contemporary literary figure about the nature of Victorian society and the individual's place in it. Butler may have been consciously juxtaposing her prophetic role with an earlier complaint of Florence Nightingale in her work *Cassandra*, which was widely read in the feminist circles in which Butler moved. Nightingale's outpouring of frustration about the limitation of women's role to the domestic sphere begins with the heading: "The voice of one crying in the" crowd,

⁸³⁸ *Voice* (1913), pp.128-155, p.131

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”⁸³⁹ She goes on to draw attention to the singularity of the lone female counter voice to the prevailing consciousness of the rest of the human race who ‘are not conscious of evil’ and suffering. In contrast,

‘one alone, awake and prematurely alive to it, must wander out in silence and solitude... and yet has no power to discover the remedy for it.’⁸⁴⁰

However, Butler, most emphatically, is claiming to have the remedy: women should emulate her and rebel.

Furthermore, Butler may well have read and been making good use of another French literary antecedent: Alexandre Dumas, fils (1827-1895) who wrote about women who were described as ‘dans le desert’.⁸⁴¹ In Dumas’ hugely popular, *La Dame aux Camélias*, the narrator in rather sentimental fashion tells the story of the courtesan, Marguerite, whose death he regretted ‘as one might regret the destruction of a beautiful work of art.’⁸⁴² He refers to the fact that respectable Parisian women want to see the homes of ‘those women... who... side by side with them, have their boxes at the Opera and at the Italiens,’ and that, now Marguerite is dead, this can be done even by ‘the most virtuous of women’.⁸⁴³ The narrator compares Marguerite with the earlier fictional character, Manon Lescault, who, following her transportation to America for immoral behaviour, ‘died in the desert... but in the arms of the man who loved her with the whole energy of his soul’. However, he states that Marguerite, abandoned by her lover,

⁸³⁹ Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra: An angry Cry against the Forced Idleness of Women* (London, 1852), p.25

⁸⁴⁰ Nightingale (1852) p.25

⁸⁴¹ Alexander Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias* (Paris, 1848), translated into English as *Camille* (London, 1852), p.10f

⁸⁴² *ibid* p.6

⁸⁴³ *ibid* p.2

died ‘in a desert of the heart’.⁸⁴⁴ The assertion of the father of Marguerite’s lover that God has not made the ‘grotesque aim’ of rescuing ‘lost women’ the purpose of life,⁸⁴⁵ is counter balanced with the ringing challenge: ‘Why do we make ourselves more strict than Christ?’⁸⁴⁶

Following its publication in 1852, the story of Marguerite was quickly made into plays and an opera and would have been well known to Butler’s French audience. Butler may have been alluding to this novel and its antecedent as part of her appeal in criticising the oppression of women in French society. Knowledge of Marguerite and Manon by her French audience would in any case have been a useful counterpoint to Butler’s rhetoric.

The significance of ‘the voice crying in the wilderness’ being a *woman’s* voice is clear throughout Butler’s works, and, here, the two words that the ‘voice’ cries are ‘we rebel’.⁸⁴⁷ This voice has a twofold import: it begins a rebellion and it creates a problem for male governments. When she began her campaign in Britain Butler had identified that a British MP felt that ‘this rebellion of the women is very awkward’ for Parliament. MPs knew how to deal with other forms of opposition but this form was difficult to address. Butler’s ‘We rebel’ may refer to this: what had worked so well in Britain could be tried again in France.⁸⁴⁸ Of course, her French audience did not need anyone British to teach them about rebellion and challenging government; it seems likely that they would have heard Butler as suggesting there was new cause worthy of popular support. In language reminiscent of Whittier, and with a revolutionary note, she states that she is

⁸⁴⁴ *ibid* p.10f

⁸⁴⁵ *ibid* p.104

⁸⁴⁶ *ibid* p.12

⁸⁴⁷ *Voice* (1913), pp.128-155, p.132f.

⁸⁴⁸ See *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.188

giving the signal to other oppressed women that the time for ‘uprising’ and ‘deliverance’ are here.⁸⁴⁹

What Did She Mean by ‘Sin’?

As already stated, by ‘the typical sin’ Butler meant prostitution. But did she mean that the prostitutes were personally sinful and needed to repent or, rather, was the sin expressed in the state regulation of prostitution, corporate, institutional sin? Rebecca Styler makes a valid point when she states that, for Butler,

‘the fundamental sinful dynamic [is] the deep-seated conflict between ‘the class which is deprived, oppressed, or denied’ and ‘that which deprives, oppresses, or denies’.’⁸⁵⁰

The link between Butler’s wide definition of oppression and the eighth century prophets has been noted by those seeking to understand and define her theological stance. Alison Milbank argues that,

‘the prophets gave her objective categories of power, of the social dimension of sin, of the relationship of power and the control of production. They see God’s message to the oppressed as one of liberation from unjust structures.’⁸⁵¹

Lucretia Flammang makes a telling point which demonstrates Butler’s originality, even against the background of these powerful denouncers of different types of oppression: the Biblical prophets ‘never championed the rights of “sinful” prostitutes’.⁸⁵² Butler, with her reference point of Jesus and the Magdalene, always emphatically insisted that two people were involved in any sexual transgression: ‘one & one make two sinners &

⁸⁴⁹ *The Hour Before the Dawn* (1876), pp.243-308, pp.106-7

⁸⁵⁰ Styler (2010) p.7, quoting Butler (ed.), *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (London, 1869), p.ix

⁸⁵¹ Milbank, Alison, ‘Josephine Butler: Christianity, Feminism and Social Action’ in J. Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, Raphael Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (Abingdon, 1987) pp.154-164, p.160

⁸⁵² Flammang (1998), pp.151-163, p.151f

their sin is one.’⁸⁵³ She also stated that the man was deeper in guilt. The question is whether she regarded the ‘sin’ of prostitution as that of the individual prostitute, or did she, as Milbank suggests, view ‘the sin of prostitution [as] that of the men who ordered the system’?⁸⁵⁴ And is Styler right to state that Butler did not ask prostitutes to repent because she thought their sin was ‘the sin of society’?⁸⁵⁵

In considering Butler’s attitude to sin and what she saw as the nature of sin, it is important to recognise that the sin and misery of the world was something that deeply troubled Butler: ‘the stark reality of sin challenged her faith, forcing her to demand, ‘Why is it thus with the creatures of Thy hand?’⁸⁵⁶ The way Butler describes the protracted period of crying out to God for an answer in her teenage years, and her suggestion that the end could have been ‘defeat or death’ demonstrate the depths of her wrestling with sin. It is suggested that the culmination of her early struggle was a conversion experience.⁸⁵⁷ However, there does not seem to be any evidence for this. She nowhere makes a clear statement of ever having been converted. In the obituary written by a close friend and fellow campaigner, whose voice has not previously featured in assessments of Butler and her relationship with God, the statement is made that her ‘religious life seems to have begun and expanded quite naturally, without any experience of an exceptional kind’.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵³ *Sursum Corda* (Liverpool, 1871) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.168-205, p.174

⁸⁵⁴ Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.158

⁸⁵⁵ Styler (2010) p.132

⁸⁵⁶ Mathers (2002), pp.123-138, pp.128,129, quoting Butler, *The Storm-Bell*, No.19, January 1900

⁸⁵⁷ Frederickson (2008), p.147

⁸⁵⁸ ‘Newspaper Biographies of Mrs. Butler & Press Notices of Her Death: Tribute by the Rev. J. P. Gledstone’, *The Shield* New Series Vol.X:92 (Jan 1907), pp.2-16, p.7

Butler's description of the one she was crying out to in her teenage crisis in the woods, as 'the God whose name I had learned was Love',⁸⁵⁹ seems to suggest that she already knew God rather than knew *about* God. Butler's crying out to God concerning the problem of evil and suffering in the world seems to have been just that: speaking to a God she knew about the huge problem she believed He was implicated in. This was to remain a problem about which, to a greater or lesser degree, she wrestled with God throughout her life. Attempting to describe this experience, Hay-Cooper said of Josephine that 'often the Spirit drove her into the wilderness' and that she knew what it meant to say "My God, why has thou forsaken me?"⁸⁶⁰

The perception that identification of sin 'aroused Evangelicals to fight against it'⁸⁶¹ seems fair in Butler's case. But it is necessary to remember that one of those she fought with was God, as she asked, 'Why is it thus with the creatures of Thy hand?' The application in Butler's context of David Bebbington's contention that Evangelicals especially felt driven to fight if they were convinced 'that they were responsible as citizens for a state of affairs that necessarily entailed sin',⁸⁶² raises the question how far the disenfranchised can be regarded as citizens. What is clear in the case of Butler and the outcasts, is her declaration that, as disenfranchised members of society women were not responsible for the state regulation of prostitution, and that if women were represented in parliament the CD Acts would not have been passed.⁸⁶³

⁸⁵⁹ *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909), 15

⁸⁶⁰ Hay-Cooper (1922), p.120

⁸⁶¹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p.133

⁸⁶² Bebbington (1989), p.133

⁸⁶³ See *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.166

Butler did insist that those she described as ‘underground’ people could not begin to understand the Christian message of love and forgiveness because of the adverse circumstances of their whole existence.⁸⁶⁴ She quoted Hugh Price Hughes as saying that he never knew a hungry man to respond to the gospel,⁸⁶⁵ and she commended the Salvation Army for creating warm, lighted, family atmospheres where a personal welcome was given to each individual.⁸⁶⁶ Their adverse circumstances she did not see as a result of the individual outcast’s failure. Rather she pointed to the sin of society and the structural nature of the exclusion of the outcast. She quoted Dr. Depres, one of her friends and supporters in France, to the effect that

‘Society is responsible for this misery and sin, for Society is *solidaire* and must one day pay the debt it owes to outraged and maddened womanhood’.⁸⁶⁷

However, Styler, goes too far in suggesting that Butler saw no need for personal repentance. Milbank states matters more carefully: Butler saw no need for ‘penance’.⁸⁶⁸ This is clear from Butler’s whole approach and from the Houses of Mercy she set up for outcast women. However, she did speak of personal sin: the Levite’s concubine is ‘crushed with the heaped and pitiless weight of the sins of others and her own’.⁸⁶⁹ She asks, ‘What am I – a sinner – that I should presume to tell them that they were sinners?’⁸⁷⁰ She refers to substitutionary atonement: ‘it is by faith that we stand – we sinners - ... accepted in the Beloved Son’.⁸⁷¹ Furthermore, if, as she claimed, Butler was using Jesus as her role model, his final word to the woman caught in adultery after

⁸⁶⁴ ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890) pp.639-654, p.646

⁸⁶⁵ *ibid* p.647

⁸⁶⁶ *ibid* p.641

⁸⁶⁷ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896), p.144

⁸⁶⁸ Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.158

⁸⁶⁹ *The Duty of Women* (1870) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.124-132, p.128

⁸⁷⁰ ‘Memories’, *Storm-Bell*, No.23 June (1900) pp.307-311, p.309

⁸⁷¹ *The Lady of Shunem* (1894), p.49

defending her robustly was ‘Go and sin no more’ (John 8:11). Butler did believe in individual sin, and, furthermore, that salvation was deeply personal – not only structural. In her tribute to Catherine Booth she insisted that ‘the salvation of the world must begin with the individual’.⁸⁷² The fact is that Butler had only positive things to say about the Salvation Army and their meetings and methods. Whilst she and Katie agreed in their refusal to preach ‘terror’ and in their decision to foreground the love of God rather than His wrath, nevertheless, Salvation Army hymns and meetings consistently spoke of God’s mercy and love in the context of personal sin.⁸⁷³

For Butler salvation was not just ‘a human encounter’, since, in the passage that Styler quotes, Butler states that she brings God’s message.⁸⁷⁴ Rebecca Jarrett’s account of her own coming to faith – following the occasion when Mrs. Butler ‘put the truth before me stern but kind’⁸⁷⁵ – seems most naturally understood as involving some sort of decision on Rebecca’s part.

Similarly, it is not apparent that

‘Butler did not believe in sudden, instantaneous conversion, but rather in a more gradual, Anglican version.’⁸⁷⁶

The account she gave of John Grey’s conversion shows that, in his case conversion was clearly not as a result of a gradual process.⁸⁷⁷ It would seem that Butler, in line with her general approach to matters of faith, was able to accommodate both a more gradual, and an instantaneous, approach to conversion, and indeed, from her own experience, a faith that could not point to anything which could be labelled conversion.

⁸⁷² ‘Catherine Booth’ (1890) pp.639-654, p.647

⁸⁷³ For Butler’s remarkably close association with the SA see above, Chapter Four.

⁸⁷⁴ Styler (2010) p.17

⁸⁷⁵ Quoted in Jordan (2001) p.218

⁸⁷⁶ Styler (2010) p.129

⁸⁷⁷ See *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (Edinburgh, 1869), pp.18-21

Styler notes striking similarities between Butler's theology and that of Latin American theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Miguez Bonino. She claims that 'Butler's vision shares all the fundamental principles of "Liberation Theology", and in this tradition her work is here placed'⁸⁷⁸ As Styler implies, liberation theology places a great deal of emphasis on transforming social structures as a way of bringing about fundamental human change. But whatever commonalities there may be in their desire to address injustice, this actually highlights a major contrast with Butler's approach. Milbank draws attention to Butler's essential mistrust of all systems which are imposed by government, and rightly states that Butler was 'pessimistic in her approach to social structures, which she saw as often evil and manipulative.'⁸⁷⁹

Butler saw social structures as likely to rob the individual of the will to determine their own future, and argued that such structures too readily become inflexible and unable to adapt to changing circumstances. Thus, she was sympathetic to some socialist ideals, but at the same time critical of the lack of self-determination to which state aid can lead. She described this, in manifestly unfavourable terms, as like a cow, given two meals a day, that is content to stay as it is. A 'change of heart' was needed.⁸⁸⁰

Milbank points out that, according to Butler,

'being a prostitute was not conducive to one's liberation. The prostitute too, must have some moral responsibility for her actions or else she ceased to be a person at all'.⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁸ Styler (2010), pp.125, 126. See also Eileen Yeo, 'Chartist Religious Belief and the Theology of Liberation' in Obelkevich et al (1987), pp.410-421, who makes similar claims for links between the Chartists and Liberation Theology.

⁸⁷⁹ Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.161

⁸⁸⁰ 'Home', *The Storm-Bell*, No.20, February (1900), pp.266-271, p.268 & 267

⁸⁸¹ Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.158.

The logical concomitant of this view is individual volition. Butler of all people did not want to take away anyone's prerogative to choose their own course of action and be responsible for it. She was, after all, the one who refused to be involved in a move to eject a prostitute from the building in which they were both living and in which the prostitute may well have been plying her trade.⁸⁸²

Thus, sin, for Butler, was neither simply corporate nor simply individual, and could not be legislated away by the state. Rather, she saw the need for human agency to roll away the stone from Lazarus' tomb in order for him to answer the call of Christ to rise to new life. She believed that the liberative call of Christ is to each individual, and that corporate guilt lies in not removing the obstacles to that call being heard or a response being possible. In an irony that surely did not escape Butler, St. Lazare prison derived its name from the one whom Christ enabled to walk free from the tomb into new life (John 11:1-44). Although she urged individuals to reach out to the oppressed, Butler held those responsible for regulating state prostitution especially culpable, as is demonstrated by her remark that she would shun one doctor like 'hell'.⁸⁸³

Solidaire

In contrast to Butler's understanding of sin was her close identification with all her 'sisters', including those who were outcasts. A remarkable similarity between her thought and that of liberationist theologians that has not been previously commented upon, is her use of the expression, 'solidaire', to describe this identification. Solidarity

⁸⁸² See A. S. G. Butler (1954), p.210f.

⁸⁸³ 'Newspaper Biographies of Mrs. Butler & Press Notices of Her Death: "The Christian"', *The Shield* New Series Vol.X:92 (Jan 1907), pp.2-16, p.8

is a key concept of liberation theology – both a sign of God’s Kingdom, and a strategy of protest for Christian people.⁸⁸⁴ For Gutierrez, poverty is

‘an expression of sin...a negation of love’. [It] ‘represents a sundering both of solidarity among men and also of communion with God’, [and] ‘is incompatible with the coming of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of love and justice’⁸⁸⁵

Gutierrez regarded living in solidarity with the poor as an essential sign of the in-breaking Kingdom of God.

The importance that Butler attached to the words of Christ – ‘In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me’ – has already been noted. Here, in *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness*, and in contrast to the solitary walker, Butler expresses the solidarity of all women, ‘Sirs, you *cannot* hold *us* in honour so long as you drag our sisters through the mire’. Using the language of the Paris commune, this woman, who had visited Buckingham Palace and was married to an Anglican clergyman, declared that sisters are ‘solidaire’ – and then quoted Christ.⁸⁸⁶ Her husband, George, George drew opprobrium for addressing a republican audience in France whilst a member of the clergy; his response was to point out that it was rather difficult to find any other type of audience in France.⁸⁸⁷

Josephine’s frequent use of the expression ‘solidaire’ demonstrates the influence of French republicanism as a major strand in her understanding of how the teaching and example of Christ ‘the dangerous leveller’ should be applied. Her application of the expression ‘solidaire’ in a Christian context is innovative in British theological thought of that period, but it is a concept familiar to liberation theologians.

⁸⁸⁴ See Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (New York, 1973) pp.287-306, chapter entitled, ‘Poverty: Solidarity and Protest’

⁸⁸⁵ Gutierrez (1973) p.295

⁸⁸⁶ Petrie (1971) p.30

⁸⁸⁷ *Personal Reminiscences* (1896) p.142

Eileen Yeo's work has demonstrated the overlap between Chartism and Liberation theology in their analysis of society and their application of Biblical texts.⁸⁸⁸ Butler appealed to the British radical tradition, including Wat Tyler, in her address to workingmen,⁸⁸⁹ and given her family's involvement in social reform in Northern England and Scotland she may have been familiar with Owenite ideas from her youth.⁸⁹⁰ Her employment of Chartist language may have been a conscious emulation of her father's activity which had led to the criticism that he was 'haranguing mobs'. This type of radical critique of the oppressive power of governments and landowners, and her expression of solidarity with French prostitutes, clearly was an instinctive aspect of Butler's outlook and rhetoric, not something she had to read up on in order to find something in common with the British workingman or the inmates of St.Lazare.

Milbank states that Butler used the interpretative tool of apocalyptic to analyse society, and describes apocalyptic as 'a radical critique of secular values in which the whole of life, social, and personal, is under judgement'.⁸⁹¹ However, Butler seems to have found some 'secular' values, like solidarity, more Christian than those expressed by the churches.

In *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* Butler appears to be casting herself in an almost Messianic role. This is shown by her answer to the argument that it is necessary for the bodies of one group of women to be sacrificed to save the health and morality of respectable women. It is the souls of all these women that are being assaulted and placed at risk, she maintains. 'Can my sister's soul be corrupted without my soul also

⁸⁸⁸ See Yeo (1987), pp.410-421

⁸⁸⁹ *Great Meeting of Working Men* (1870) pp.67-76, p.73f

⁸⁹⁰ For her family's political sympathies, see above Chapter Two. See also Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.161.

⁸⁹¹ Milbank (1987) pp.154-164, p.156

being attacked?’ Yes it can. Her soul can avoid being attacked ‘if, and only if’ Butler offers her life to God for her sister’s salvation – ‘as my Redeemer offered Himself in sacrifice that I might be saved.’⁸⁹²

Maria Selvidge wrote of Maria W. Stewart, the 19th Century African American Bible interpreter – ‘She casts herself in the image of a redeemer or prophet’ knowing that God had raised up such before and could do it again.⁸⁹³ In interpreting her prophetic role as in some way redemptive, Butler would stand in the line of Moses, who led the children of Israel out of slavery, and Deborah, who took to the battlefield when no man would. George had early likened Josephine to Deborah and to Joan of Arc,⁸⁹⁴ and in Joan’s own country Butler seems to have been emulating such bold leadership.

Conclusion

Stuart claimed that Butler’s continental tour was a turning point in the campaign, as national organisations were started in different European countries and *Voix dans le desert* was quickly translated into several other European languages. Reaction to her speeches – admittedly as related by Butler – shows that her rhetoric was effective and that her audience picked up on her language of desert, typical sin, and sisters being ‘solidaire’, to endorse her claim to be a prophet sent from God. A letter addressed to ‘Citizen’ Josephine Butler and ‘Dear Sister’, makes explicit that her rhetoric struck a nerve through its Republican echoes and its talk of sisters being *solidaire*. Butler must have liked this letter, since she chose to publish it in *The Storm-Bell*.⁸⁹⁵ Apart from the

⁸⁹² *Voice* (1913) pp.128-155 p.139

⁸⁹³ M. J. Selvidge, *Notorious Voices: Feminist Biblical Interpretation, 1500-1920* (New York, 1996) p.210

⁸⁹⁴ *Great Meeting of Working Men* (1870) pp.67-76, p.68

⁸⁹⁵ ‘Brief Recollections of My Fellow-workers. No. III: Pauline de Grandpre’, *The Storm-Bell*, No. 12, February (1899) pp.137-141, p.138-139

opening ascription and greeting which she might well have enjoyed, the statement that it is ‘not in the desert’ that her ‘voice has found an echo’ but in the consciences of her audience, especially her working class audience, was perfect material for future quotation in the cause.⁸⁹⁶

Butler’s prophecy did not contain new revelations about dates and times, or about portents in the heavens; she simply applied her understanding of Scripture to the ‘Giant’ she was faced with – the state regulation of prostitution. Her listeners may have disagreed with the content of her prophesying, but they could not, with justification, have claimed that she was offering a new revelation of God which could not be found in Scripture. Elizabeth Andrews and Katherine Bushnell, who investigated the state regulation of prostitution on Butler’s behalf, said in the dedication to their report that Butler was a

‘Prophetess of the truth in Christ Jesus... whom God hath anointed... because, in the spirit of her master, she hath “loved righteousness and hated iniquity.”⁸⁹⁷

What was new was that it was a woman’s voice, passionately proclaiming, on behalf of other women, God’s opposition to the lives of men both individually and collectively. Flammang aptly comments that ‘women prophets evoke suspicion because they transcend the patriarchal order: they answer to no man, but to God.’⁸⁹⁸ As was seen in Chapter Two, the fate of women preachers & prophets was referenced in Whittier’s poem, ‘Pennsylvania Hall’, and *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness* makes clear that Butler believed herself to be one of the women whose mouth had been anointed

⁸⁹⁶ *Voice* (1913) pp.128-155 p.139;

⁸⁹⁷ Elizabeth W. Andrew & Katherine C. Bushnell, *The Queen’s Daughters in India* (London, 1898), in J & S vol. 5, pp.244-325, p.245

⁸⁹⁸ Flammang, (1998) pp.151-163, p.159. Flammang, p.157, is right to state that ‘the legitimacy of women’s public voice became a dominant theme throughout Butler’s polemics’

with a burning coal. Through her telling description of the prostitutes as ‘handmaids of shame’⁸⁹⁹ with its implicit contrast with ‘handmaids of the Lord’ (Acts 2),⁹⁰⁰ Butler proclaimed that others who should be prophesying were being enrolled in prostitution instead.

The effect on Butler of this stage of her campaign was months of ‘darkness’ and physical prostration, which significantly included a request for the large book on anti-slavery that she might discover how the abolitionists coped when their efforts for abolition had not yet achieved freedom for the slaves.⁹⁰¹ It does not seem surprising, therefore, that in *Voice*, Butler, in prophetic mode, seems to identify both with the despairing Hagar in the wilderness and with Christ descending to proclaim release to the captive. In his introduction, James Stuart, who knew what it cost Butler at the time, quotes her reference to

‘all that I suffered, and the sorrows through which the angel of God’s presence brought me out alive’... [I am] ‘ready to go down to Hades again, if it were necessary, for the deliverance of ...[my] fellow creatures – but God does not require that descent more than once.’⁹⁰²

⁸⁹⁹ *Voice* (1913) pp.128-155 p. 140

⁹⁰⁰ *Prophets and Prophetesses* (1898) p.4

⁹⁰¹ See Jordan (2001) p.172, note 19

⁹⁰² *Voice* (1913) pp.128-155 p.130

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TYPICAL OUTCAST

David Scott notes that Butler found particularly moving the biblical passages on Hagar and the Magnificat ‘where God regarded the lowliness of the handmaiden’.⁹⁰³ This chapter will demonstrate the significance of Butler's biblical interpretation by focusing on her 1894 publication *The Lady of Shunem*, which contains her exposition of the Hagar, Abraham and Sarah narratives and in which she says that the ‘world came to be filled with Hagers’.⁹⁰⁴ *The Lady of Shunem* is her only complete book of biblical studies and drew together concerns and theological themes that she had had for over 40 years.

The 20th Century theologian Phyllis Trible, famously, identifying Hagar’s story as a ‘Text of Terror’, said Hagar was a woman used, abused and rejected.⁹⁰⁵ A century earlier, when confronted with the abusive treatment of women in Victorian society, Josephine Butler similarly searched in Scripture and made a daring, forceful and consciously independent reading of Hagar as ‘The Typical Outcast’. This chapter will demonstrate that, for Butler, Hagar is a type of outcast woman everywhere – women oppressed by the sexual double standard or oppressed by chattel slavery. Once again, as the voice of the outcast, Butler provides a fresh perspective on the human characters in the biblical narrative and on the God she sees portrayed there, and this chapter will

⁹⁰³ David Scott, ‘Josephine Butler and St. Catherine of Siena’, in Milbank (2007), pp.51-68, p.65

⁹⁰⁴ Following Butler, Abraham and Sarah will be referred to by these names rather than by the names Abram and Sarai used in Genesis. Part of Butler’s first chapter on ‘The Lady of Shunem’ is reprinted in *The Christian Commonwealth*, 18 December 1902, under the title ‘A Mother to Mothers: On the Scriptural Story of the Lady of Shunem’. The copy held by Liverpool University Library is inscribed ‘To Maud’, quite possibly Butler’s niece, Maud Garston. JB 1/5/14

⁹⁰⁵ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Minneapolis, 1984) p.1

demonstrate how knowledge of her history crucially informs an understanding of her biblical interpretation and public theology.

Firstly an introduction to the book and to the interpretation of the Hagar narratives will be given through a brief summary of the biblical narrative of Hagar, its problematic nature, its use in the New Testament and consequent place in Victorian Christian thought. Secondly, the rather dismissive assessments of this book by some earlier commentators will be challenged through contextualising this work in the concerns and events of Butler's life at the time of writing. Thirdly, the exposition of the Hagar narratives by three earlier women Bible interpreters will be outlined to illustrate, by contrast, the innovative and controversial nature of Butler's interpretation. Fourthly, the previously overlooked importance of anti-slavery beliefs as part of Butler's interpretative perspective on Hagar will be demonstrated, and Butler's exposition will be juxtaposed with the works of later theologians to demonstrate the extraordinarily powerful nature of her work. Fifthly, *The Lady of Shunem*, as a whole, will be briefly considered to argue that, since this work has never before been examined as a unity, highly significant interpretative and apologetic strategies employed by Butler have been overlooked. She employed a variety of interpretative techniques, familiar to 20th and 21st Century interpreters, but not previously noted in a 19th Century woman Bible interpreter. Following this, a thus-far undiscussed source, published around the same time as *The Lady of Shunem*, is examined to show Butler's equally striking ideas about the canon of Scripture. Finally, a letter from Butler to Benjamin Jowett in which she engages with his views on Scripture will be assessed.

Introduction to The Lady of Shunem

The book is named after the Shunemite woman who is helped by the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings chapter 4. Butler deals with the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar in both Chapters 3 and 4, covering Genesis chapters 11-21 but especially chs.16 and 21. In Chapter 3 Butler writes on Abraham as a father and in Chapter 4 on Hagar. Chapter 5 deals with 'The God of families'.

The first point that it is important to note about the narrative of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar is that the story itself, as recorded in Genesis, is problematic in theme and style. The story deals with the Egyptian slave, Hagar, being given by her mistress Sarah to be used as a surrogate mother to bear Abraham's child. When Hagar becomes pregnant, there is friction between Sarah and Hagar. Regardless of the fact that Hagar is expecting his child, Abraham tells Sarah that she can deal with her slave as she sees fit. Hagar runs away into the wilderness to escape from her mistress's harsh treatment. The word used to describe Sarah's treatment of Hagar is the same strong word that is used of the affliction of the Israelite slaves in Egypt (Genesis 16:6; Exodus 1:11). Hagar is then told to return to this abusive enslavement by God. Subsequently she is cast out by Abraham at Sarah's insistence, and again faces death in the wilderness, this time with her child. Finally, God intervenes to save the life of the child.

In style, as the Old Testament theologian Gerhard von Rad wrote, the

'...narrative here is very spacious, so to speak, with much to be read between the lines. The narrator makes room for many thoughts and reflections and is in no hurry to prescribe one idea or opinion for the reader'.

He also comments that the expositor looks around in vain for an interpretation; like Hagar ‘...he is left alone in a wide terrain’.⁹⁰⁶ No judgements are made in the text about the morality of Abraham and Sarah’s treatment of Hagar and her son Ishmael. The narrator, the characters in the story, and the voice of God all maintain silence on this issue. In fact there are a lot of silences in the text. Abraham and Sarah speak about Hagar but not to her. Hagar is only heard speaking to God. Ishmael never speaks or is spoken to. However, Sarah and God speak of him. Sarah speaks in resolute manner to command his exclusion. God speaks in response to Ishmael’s suffering to promise him a future. There is ambiguity as to what is done by Hagar, and later Ishmael, to incur displeasure, and no assessment of whether their behaviour in any way merited their punishment.

The second point to note about the Genesis text is how New Testament passages were used to interpret it from the time of Paul onwards. Three elements carried weight here. Firstly, in the New Testament Abraham and Sarah receive approval and endorsement for their faith in Hebrews 12:8-17. Similarly in Romans, ‘Abraham believed and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’ (Romans 4:9; Genesis 15:6). Those commenting on the text before Butler’s time tended to use the Bible for proof texts or to highlight examples to follow or avoid. On the strength of their endorsement by the New Testament, Abraham and Sarah were held out as models of faith, those chosen by God to receive his blessing, those through whom succeeding generations would be blessed. Any potentially questionable behaviour they exhibited was glossed over by suggesting that they behaved according to the standards of the day or that this gave God the opportunity to show His greater wisdom and power.

⁹⁰⁶ Gerhard von Rad (1985) p.195

Furthermore, in the New Testament Sarah is held up as a role model for wives, in particular. Her obedience to her husband is commended. The 19th Century marriage service usually quoted the words ‘Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands...even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.’ (1 Peter 3:1) How Sarah behaved as wife and mother was regarded as an example to women down the centuries. In addition, Paul makes use of the story of Hagar’s rejection without passing any moral judgement on it. He utilises it in Galatians 4:21-31, as an allegory to illustrate how the Christian church had replaced the Jewish nation in God’s purposes or, to put it another way, how the new covenant in Christ has replaced the old covenant. So the heirs of Hagar equate to Israel and the heirs of Sarah are the Christians. When reading Genesis with this allegory in mind it was natural to accept that Hagar was ultimately expendable and of less importance than Sarah. This was taken to be true even from God’s perspective. Hagar’s offspring were not the heirs of the promise.

The Importance of the Context in which Butler was Writing

Butler’s stated aim in *The Lady of Shunem* was

‘to try to express... some of the lessons God has been teaching me... to share with other parents the comfort which he has given to me, and the light... he has caused to fall, for me, on the words of Scripture in relation to the deepest of human affections.’⁹⁰⁷

Butler’s description of God in this book is as ‘the God of families’, and the work contains a series of studies from the Bible addressed to fathers, but especially, she says,

⁹⁰⁷ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.1

to mothers.⁹⁰⁸ The opening words and sentiments of Butler's, *The Lady of Shunem*, thus form a conventional enough introduction to a devotional work by a Victorian lady.

Butler's biographer, E. Moberly Bell, expressed the opinion that 'it is not an important book'.⁹⁰⁹ The historian Helen Mathers used the word 'trite', and characterised the work as sentimental.⁹¹⁰ However, Amanda Benckhuysen used words like 'brilliant' and 'unusual',⁹¹¹ and both Jenny Daggers and Benckhuysen draw a highly important comparison between Butler's biblical interpretation and that of Phyllis Trible.⁹¹²

What are the reasons for these apparently opposing assessments of *The Lady of Shunem*, and the varied evaluations of Butler's biblical interpretation? The answer seems to lie in whether the assessor is interested in Butler as a biblical interpreter, and able to contextualise her discourse. Historians may be focused on other aspects of her life and legacy, and some may be embarrassed by her religious zeal. Those who are interested in Butler as a religious thinker may undervalue her biblical interpretation because they lack the detailed knowledge of historical context, which is necessary in order to appreciate her achievement fully. The differing assessments of *The Lady of Shunem* will be seen to demonstrate the importance of locating each piece of Butler's biblical exposition in its original context in her life.

⁹⁰⁸ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.1. Butler employs this theme in her tribute to Catherine Booth: 'Catherine Booth', in *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 58 July 1 (1890), pp.639-654, p.639f. See also *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.283, where George, too, uses it in the prayer he wrote for Josephine.

⁹⁰⁹ E. Moberly Bell, *Josephine Butler: Flame of Fire* (London, 1962), p.208

⁹¹⁰ Mathers (2001) pp 282-312, p.310

⁹¹¹ Amanda Benckhuysen, 'Reading between the Lines: Josephine Butler's Socially Conscious Commentary on Hagar' in Christiana de Groot & Marion Ann Taylor (eds.), *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible* (Atlanta, 2007), pp.135-148, p.136

⁹¹² Daggers (2007); Benckhuysen (2007) pp.135-148, p.147

Referring to the lessons Butler is attempting to teach ‘mothers who may not have the faith that the Lady of Shunem had in the prophet Elisha’, Helen Mathers finds echoes of Josephine’s own life, and that of other mothers who had worked for the campaign.

However, she concludes that ‘there is also something trite about the lesson’.⁹¹³

According to Moberly Bell, the context of writing *The Lady of Shunem* was the very severe winter of 1894-1895 when Butler, accustomed to escaping to warmer climes in the winter months, stayed in London because her son Georgie had been thrown from his horse and was desperately ill having suffered a severe fracture of his skull. Moberly Bell concludes that Butler found relief in her work, turning her mind away from the immediate problems to write something ‘quite unconnected with them.’⁹¹⁴

The suggestion that what Butler was writing was ‘quite unconnected’ with her immediate problems, or, indeed, with the circumstances of that severe winter needs to be challenged. In a letter to her son, George, written slightly later than the publication of *Lady of Shunem*, Butler vividly describes the severity of the winter and her reaction to the suffering it caused. She writes of ‘battling on in this state of siege’, and of ‘Quite well drest [sic] men with gloves on’ rapping on the window looking for work. She ‘can’t help crying at the sight, it is a sign of such deep & widespread distress’ which ‘there is no meeting’ and ‘the death roll is heavy’. The men without means of support, desperate for work, made her think of their wives and families, whom she specifically mentions queuing for water.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹³ Mathers (2001) pp 282-312, p.310

⁹¹⁴ Bell (1962) p.208f.

⁹¹⁵ *Letter to George Butler Feb.15th 1895*. For further details of her living conditions see Bell (1962) p.209

All of this could have led Butler to value the comforts of home and family, and contrast them more sharply than ever with the fate of the outcast. In addition, as Jordan explains, the head injury that Butler's son, Georgie, had suffered, made him violent and unpredictable, and following medical advice, his pregnant wife, Mia, was not allowed to go near him.⁹¹⁶ Mia, who had been Josephine's ward, was expecting her first child, and, from references in Josephine's diary and correspondence, had at least one miscarriage or still birth.⁹¹⁷ As Butler was vividly aware, her uncle, also called George, had died following a similar riding accident, causing great distress to her father and aunts.⁹¹⁸ All of these factors must surely have made Butler feel worried and anxious about the fate of her son, daughter-in-law and future grandchild. Furthermore, it is clear that Butler's relationship with her son, Georgie, seems to have been clouded by his resentment that she did not spend more time with her family and less working on her campaign.⁹¹⁹ When Mathers says that events of Butler's life and of those who campaigned with her are reflected here, perhaps it is this to which she is alluding.⁹²⁰

Georgie's strong expressions of resentment are after the winter of 1895, and, notably, in his failure to inform her close friends and fellow campaigners in time for them to attend her funeral.⁹²¹ Nevertheless, it is not hard to imagine that Georgie was much on Butler's mind at this time, not just because he was seriously ill, but because of her

⁹¹⁶ Jordan (2001), p.271

⁹¹⁷ 'Private Thoughts', a spiritual diary kept by Josephine Butler (June 1890-Sept 1899) Northumberland Record Office, Entry 2, Sunday June 29th 1890, and Entry 3 Whitsunday May 17 1891 (no page numbers); Letter of Josephine E. Butler to the Misses Priestman, 3 May 1895

⁹¹⁸ *Memoir of John Grey* (1869) p.93

⁹¹⁹ Jordan (2001) p.293-4

⁹²⁰ Mathers (2001) pp 282-312, p.310

⁹²¹ Jordan (2001) p.96

concerns, past or present, about her influence on his spiritual life.⁹²² *The Lady of Shunem* refers to the need for a mother to leave her child in order to find Christ and so be able to bring Christ to her child.⁹²³ Writing about this and another work that she regards as sentimental, Mathers says that, elsewhere, Butler preferred to draw lessons from stories of her own life and her own campaigns rather than resort to ‘religious clichés’.⁹²⁴ However, it may be that Butler was seeing her own life in that of the Shunemite, but writing about it in a way that was more universally acceptable, and, perhaps, more sensitive, than naming any of her own children. It was second nature to Butler to see and to seek echoes of her own experience in Scripture, and it was her stated intention to pass on in this book what she had learned in her own life from Scripture. Whether it is accurate to describe someone as a Christ-bearer who can bring Christ to others, is a matter of opinion but it is certainly a recognisably orthodox Christian understanding going back to Acts 9:15, where Paul is described by God as ‘a chosen vessel to bear my name before all nations’. It is not therefore, necessarily, trite. It is clear, then, that connections can be made between Josephine’s writings and the circumstances of her life during that winter. Moberly Bell saw *The Lady of Shunem* as a collection of reflections on unrelated episodes from the Bible.⁹²⁵ The episodes, however, are related in their connection with motherhood and fatherhood, and in resonating with Josephine’s experiences – particularly during that period. The

⁹²² Her spiritual diaries refer to a covenant with God and praying that her whole family will be reunited after death. See ‘Private Thoughts’, a spiritual diary kept by Josephine Butler (June 1890-Sept 1899) Entry June 6 1891 Saturday evening Wimbledon. For a discussion of Butler’s concerns about her sons’ spiritual lives, see Nolland (2004) p.53 f/n149

⁹²³ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.30

⁹²⁴ Mathers (2001), p.310.

⁹²⁵ E. Moberly Bell (1962) p.209

introduction concerns ‘the relation of the earthly parent to the Eternal Father of all’.⁹²⁶ The chapter on the eponymous Lady of Shunem explores the story from 2 Kings 4:8-37, where the much longed for only son of the Shunemite woman dies and she goes to the man of God to seek the life of her child.⁹²⁷ The chapter on Abraham explores his role as husband and father and his place within the will of God, most especially, as Butler explains, ‘as a father, a human earthly father’, not as ‘the Seer, the forerunner of the Messiah.’⁹²⁸ Butler is also concerned for the fate of Abraham’s son, Ishmael:

‘No matter how wayward... no matter how far your Ishmael seems now... from God... if you continue to hold fast your God, you shall hear the words, “As for thy Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold, I have blessed him.”’⁹²⁹

The chapter on Hagar, which Butler entitles ‘The Bar Sinister’⁹³⁰, examines the fate of the pregnant woman, unexpectedly driven away from her home by what may well have been violent treatment. It also includes Butler’s thoughts on the mother’s later abandonment in the wilderness, and her distancing herself, physically, from her son because she cannot watch him die.⁹³¹ The chapter entitled, ‘The God of Families’, ranges over a number of passages and themes, and reinforces Butler’s belief in God’s care for families.⁹³²

Motherhood connects all of these chapters, as all these women are concerned that their sons’ lives are in jeopardy and seek God’s blessing upon them. Hugh Price Hughes believed Butler’s robust defence of God’s care for the mother and child to be a bold

⁹²⁶ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.3

⁹²⁷ *ibid* pp.9-36

⁹²⁸ *ibid* pp.37-69, p.37

⁹²⁹ *ibid* pp.37-69, p.67

⁹³⁰ Taylor & Weir (2006) p.236, explain that ‘the Bar Sinister’ was originally an indicator of illegitimacy in the family line on heraldic coats of arms

⁹³¹ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) pp.70-92.

⁹³² *ibid* pp.93-118

counter argument to the one that Annie Besant had recently put forward in her autobiography.⁹³³ This is borne out by the way that Butler's remarks in *Lady of Shunem* echo the language Besant used in saying that her faith suffered because of watching 'the seemingly purposeless torturing of my little one'.⁹³⁴ Butler, who does not mention that she has watched her own child die – in Eva's case following a needless accident⁹³⁵ – interprets Scripture to argue that God is the 'God of families' and not 'a cruel and torturing god.'⁹³⁶ Thus, far from being 'unconnected', knowledge of Butler's personal history, and the context of her authorship of *The Lady of Shunem*, are seen to be crucial to an understanding of its content and Butler's motives in writing it.

Interpretations of the Hagar Narrative

Modern commentators have been critical of the fact that the narrator, the characters in the story and the voice of God all maintain silence on the issue of the morality of Abraham and Sarah's treatment of Hagar and her son Ishmael. John L. Thompson points out one historically loaded aspect of the legacy of Hagar's dismissal. The words 'Cast out the bondswoman and her son' were used to begin the first crusade, and he asks, 'how does Hagar's happy ending justify her earlier treatment?'⁹³⁷ In Butler's view, the apostle's use of the story of Sarah and Hagar as an allegory, without commenting on the morality of it, has resulted in the complacency of later Christians about the Hagar's of their day, and the cry 'cast out the bondswoman and her son' has lost its character of

⁹³³ Hugh Price Hughes, 'The Lady of Shunem' in *The Methodist Times A Journal of Religious and Social Movement*, Vol.X. No.519 London, December 6, 1894 p.825. See Annie Besant, *An Autobiography* (London, 1885)

⁹³⁴ Besant (1885) p.90. See too pp.86-88 for Besant's description of her child's illness.

⁹³⁵ See *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.152f

⁹³⁶ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.120, 121

⁹³⁷ Thompson (2001), p.63

meanness'.⁹³⁸ Faced with the 'unlovely story' of Sarah, Hagar and Abraham, Butler was not going to remain silent just because the Church and the apostle appeared to be on the other side. 'I prefer frankly to express my disgust' she said.⁹³⁹

In looking at Butler's interpretation of this story, a brief comparison with three other Nineteenth Century women bible interpreters will show her originality. Frances Elizabeth King (1757-1821) was the daughter of Sir Francis Bernard, baronet, governor of New Jersey. She was born in Lincoln and lived in England. She married a clergyman and wrote the popular 1811 publication, *Female Scripture Characters; Exemplifying Female Virtues* (London, 1811).⁹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Fries Ellet (1810-1877) was an American author who published eighteen books, including in 1849, *Family Pictures from the Bible* focusing on lessons for families found in Scripture. She married a professor of Chemistry.⁹⁴¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) was the daughter of Lyman Beecher, a seminary professor and famous preacher. Her husband Calvin Stowe was a biblical scholar and taught in a seminary. Known for the bestseller *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which contains a large amount of biblical quotes and arguments, Beecher Stowe published *Women in Sacred History* in 1873.⁹⁴²

Ellet, King and Stowe, in line with other commentators, approved of Sarah as a role model. 'She appears to have possessed many of those domestic virtues, so appropriate in a woman: she is recorded as a good and obedient wife;' wrote Frances Elizabeth King

⁹³⁸ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.74

⁹³⁹ *ibid* p.73

⁹⁴⁰ Extracted in Marian Taylor and Heather Weir, *Let her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis* (Waco, 2006) pp.112-119

⁹⁴¹ In Taylor and Weir (2006) pp.139-145

⁹⁴² *ibid* pp.210-217

in 1813.⁹⁴³ When Sarah obeyed her husband she was a positive role model; when she took matters into her own hands and gave Hagar to Abraham, she was criticised for lacking her husband's faith.⁹⁴⁴ Given the principle that a wife submitted to her husband and not the other way around, some commentators felt the need to explain the fact that Abraham obeyed Sarah's instruction to banish Hagar. So Ellet posited that a higher purpose than Sarah's was to be accomplished: 'Abraham obeyed not the imperious demand of his wife, but the Divine direction'.⁹⁴⁵

As well as instructions about the need for wives to be subject to their husbands, lessons regarding the subjection of servants to their masters and mistresses were drawn from the Hagar narrative. Thus, King could write that,

'Hagar was wrong in forgetting her subjection and obligations to her mistress; and Sarah, for not allowing for the force of temptations to which she had subjected her, by raising her out of her proper sphere; but how exactly do we see in this, the mistress and servant of the present day; and how useful a lesson it presents to each.'⁹⁴⁶

Ellet was well aware of the pathos of

'the wandering of the outcast Hagar and Ishmael ...and the anguish of the mother, who lays down her child to die, and retires to weep, that she may not behold his last agonies...'

Yet she sees no need to justify the treatment of Hagar.

'The familiar story with its typical meaning, need not be dwelt on here, as the Egyptian and her son were no longer a portion of the family of Abraham.'⁹⁴⁷

Harriet Beecher Stowe's interpretation of the Hagar story is interesting in the light of her opposition to slavery in the United States. She, nevertheless, seems to accept the

⁹⁴³ Frances Elizabeth King, in Taylor & Weir (2006) pp.112-118, p.113

⁹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Fries Ellet, in Taylor & Weir (2006), pp.139-144, p.140

⁹⁴⁵ Ellet, in Taylor & Weir (2006) pp.139-144, p.143

⁹⁴⁶ King, in Taylor & Weir (2006) pp.112-118, p.115

⁹⁴⁷ Ellet, in Taylor & Weir (2006) pp.139-144, p.143, 144

fact of slavery in the Bible.⁹⁴⁸ As Benckhuysen notes, Stowe maintains ‘a high view of Abraham as a model of faith, wisdom, and righteousness’ yet sees no contradiction between this and Abraham’s ownership of slaves.⁹⁴⁹ In line with the conventions of American slave owning, Stowe supports Sarah’s treatment of her uppity maid, and compliments Sarah on her gracious care for her maid and her maid’s child. So Stowe believes that at times Sarah

‘...overwhelmed Hagar with kindness, and helped her through the trials of motherhood, and petted little Ishmael till he grew too saucy to be endured.’⁹⁵⁰

At this point it is necessary to state how opposed Butler’s view of slavery was to that of Beecher Stowe, and to demonstrate how significant Butler’s firm anti-slavery stance was in her interpretation of this passage. As Benckhuysen notes, Stowe argues that biblical slavery did not have the worst aspects of American slavery – the slave being more like a child in the family.⁹⁵¹ However, it is important to add that whilst Stowe may have been right in some respects, she was ignoring the basic point that, as in Abraham’s case, the master claimed the right to father children with a female slave who was a ‘child’ in his household. Butler described the servants in her household as being like children in the family, but this was in respect of them needing protection. She also said that most of them had married respectably.⁹⁵² The common acceptance that a master fathered children with the female slaves under his ‘protection’ in chattel slavery shows

⁹⁴⁸ See Stowe, in Taylor & Weir (2006), pp.210-217, p.211

⁹⁴⁹ Amanda W. Benckhuysen, ‘Reading between the Lines: Josephine Butler’s Socially Conscious Commentary on Hagar’ in Christiana de Groot & Marion Ann Taylor (eds.), *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible* (Atlanta, 2007), pp. 135-148, p.143

⁹⁵⁰ Stowe, in Taylor & Weir (2006) pp.158-164, p.163

⁹⁵¹ Benckhuysen (2007) pp. 135-148, p.144

⁹⁵² ‘Meeting of Ladies. Speech Given by Josephine E. Butler to the Women’s Meeting, Birmingham, Thursday 10 March 1870’, *The Shield* (28 March 1870) p.32, in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2 pp.77-79, p.79

the clear similarity between it and biblical slavery. It also shows how far removed either form of slavery was from the model of servant master/mistress relationship that Butler had in mind.⁹⁵³

The Continuing Power of Butler's Interpretation

In turning to the assessment of Butler's interpretation by modern day scholars, the case is well made by Benckhuysen that

'Butler's unique ability to engage the text through the lens of her own experience unlocks the power of this ancient story as the word of God for modern society.'⁹⁵⁴

Benckhuysen highlights the fact that Butler read the text differently to her contemporaries by reading from the standpoint of Hagar – what Benckhuysen calls 'imaginative identification'⁹⁵⁵ – and seeing systemic injustice in the way Hagar was treated. Benckhuysen points out the similar approach taken in the Twentieth Century by the 'mujerista'⁹⁵⁶ theologian, Elsa Tamez, and the 'womanist'⁹⁵⁷ theologian Delores Williams. In common with Tamez and Williams Butler nevertheless found hope in the text too since she saw God as on the side of the oppressed slave woman. In pointing out the comparison between these three female interpreters in different social, national and temporal locations, Benckhuysen is not suggesting that one directly influenced the other

⁹⁵³ See Ann Loades, *Feminist Theology: Voices from the Past* (Oxford, 2001) p.134 for discussion of the dangers of domestic service for women.

⁹⁵⁴ Benckhuysen (2007) pp.135-148, p.136

⁹⁵⁵ Benckhuysen, 'Reading Hagar's Story from the Margins: Family Resemblances between Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Female Interpreters' in Calvert-Koyzis & Weir (2009) pp.17-32, p. 23. Benckhuysen takes the phrase from Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. See n.29.

⁹⁵⁶ For an introduction to this movement that is rooted in the experience of Hispanic women, see Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the 21st Century* (New York, 1996)

⁹⁵⁷ 'Womanism' is a theological movement rooted in the experience of African American Women. See Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (New York, 2002)

or claiming to give an in depth justification for the validity of comparing them.

Recovering the voices of female Bible interpreters is considered to have three stages: first recovery and preservation of the interpretation; secondly analysis of it; and thirdly assessing its place in the history of interpretation.⁹⁵⁸ Since this field is in such early stages of development Benckhuysen's work on Butler falls into the analysis phase but in noting the similarity with Tamez and Williams who wrote at a much later date, Benckhuysen is pointing out the sort of factors which need to be explored in the third stage – that of assessing Butler's place in the history of interpretation and whether there were common factors that led all three women to read in a similar way. When Rebecca Styler discussed the resonances between Butler's thought and that of 20th Century Latin American Liberation theologians she did explore the parallels between Butler's historical circumstances and those of the Liberation theologians which may have given rise to the similarities.⁹⁵⁹

Other notable aspects of Butler's interpretation are the manner in which Butler makes clear her attitude to Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, writes about how she sees the character of God and comments on Paul's use of the Hagar narrative as allegory. Each of these three areas will now be addressed in turn and aspects of Butler's 'own experience' will be adduced to amplify her exegesis and show the force of it.

Butler's most audacious remark occurs in assigning blame to Abraham, as Butler go on the attack and subverts the notion of 'fallen women' by asserting that it was Abraham who 'fell; for it was a fall; and troubles and anxieties, which he well deserved, were

⁹⁵⁸ N. Calvert-Koyzis, & H. Weir, 'Assessing their Place in History: Female Biblical Interpreters as Proto-Feminists', in Calvert Koyzis and Weir (eds.) (2009) pp.1-16, p.4

⁹⁵⁹ See Chapter Seven above

waiting for him.’⁹⁶⁰ This she juxtaposes with God’s command to Abraham ““Walk before me, and be thou perfect.””⁹⁶¹ Almost as daring is an allusion to sexually transmitted disease, as she argues that the relationship between Hagar and Abraham is the means of ‘poisoning the sources of human life, and bearing disastrous fruits for the world.’⁹⁶²

Benckhuysen makes the valid point that Butler does not measure Sarah’s behaviour by the standards of Abrahamic society or make any allowances for Sarah being a woman in a patriarchal age.⁹⁶³ However, it should be pointed out that whether one agrees with Butler’s harsh criticism of Sarah or not, Butler’s robust denunciation of ‘Sarahs’ is in line with her uncompromising stance on moral issues. She said of those who criticised her for failure to compromise that they were ‘broken reeds’ who were giving an uncertain tune.⁹⁶⁴ The imperious Sarah is held accountable, as much as her husband, for the fate of outcast Hagar, ‘the maid whose name she never utters and to whom she never speaks’,⁹⁶⁵ and the implication is that, as a mother herself, she should have been sympathetic.

Elsewhere, too, Butler is unequivocal, not to mention bluntly offensive, in what she says about women of the higher classes whom she describes in quotation marks as ‘women that are at ease’. Butler borrows here from the biblical eighth century prophets – Isaiah, Amos, Hosea and Micah. This phrase, and the way in which it is applied in the Old Testament, would have been familiar to her readers. It is used as a criticism of women

⁹⁶⁰ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.59

⁹⁶¹ *ibid*

⁹⁶² *ibid* p.71

⁹⁶³ Benckhuysen (2009) pp.17-32, p.26f

⁹⁶⁴ Bell (1962) p.98

⁹⁶⁵ Phyllis Trible and Letty Russell (eds.), *Hagar, Sarah, and their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives* (Louisville, 2006) p.38

of privilege who do not see life from God's perspective and fail to care for the oppressed. In Isaiah 32:9 and 32:11, it is used to warn 'careless women', 'women that are at ease', of hard times of judgment ahead. To Victorian ears the language here is fairly graphic in saying that these women need to strip naked and gird sackcloth upon their loins.

In Amos 6:1 'woe to them that are at ease in Zion' is followed by the vivid description of those who 'lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches...drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.' Those condemned here do not care about Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers and held captive. Written at a much later time than Joseph's enslavement, 'the affliction of Joseph' here seems to encompass any needy and oppressed. For Butler it encompasses any who are enslaved, thus including those in the white slavery of prostitution. The even more robust language of Amos chapter 4, which parallels Amos 6 in its judgement on those 'at ease', describes the rich women as 'cows' because they take their ease, live in luxury and drink wine whilst the poor are oppressed.⁹⁶⁶

Benckhuysen is right to note that Butler portrays Hagar as a victim. The near death of Hagar's son reminds Butler of abandoned mothers charged with infanticide – some of them mere girl-mothers themselves – who were shown no pity. She suggests that, if Hagar had lived in the 19th Century, and God had not intervened then Hagar would have

⁹⁶⁶ Amos 4: 1 In the Authorised Version of Butler's day the word is kine. Butler uses the expression women who are 'at ease' in a similar context elsewhere e.g. *The Hour Before Dawn*, Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp.243-308, p.281, where it comes after her description of women as 'cowardly' because they are subservient to male custom and not to Christ.

been found guilty of infanticide and imprisoned for life.⁹⁶⁷ This is another example of the ideas ‘which were always at the front of Josephine’s mind’, as Bell put it.⁹⁶⁸ Similarly, Butler portrayed Hagar and her child as objects of pity when she referred not long after her ‘Voice Crying in the Wilderness’ tour to ‘Many a poor Hagar...with her starving child’, making her way to a French industrial colony. Thus, Butler sees Hagar as subject to ill treatment by the Abrahams and Sarahs. She also sees the justice system as holding the mother solely responsible for the starvation of her child rather than holding accountable the father who has cast them out. But in emphasising the culpability of Sarahs and Abrahams and the power that they have over Hagar, and in drawing attention to the systemic nature of the oppression of Hagar, was Butler denying Hagar any agency or reducing her to simply a victim? She describes the French Hagar as active in leaving behind her ‘the great wilderness of the city’.⁹⁶⁹ She also describes the industrial colony as an ‘abode of industry’ as well as ‘peace’. But it is in relation to God that Butler most clearly asserts Hagar’s status.

Having given her interpretation of the human actors in the biblical story, and applied it to the men and women of her day who condemn women to be perpetual outcasts, Butler turns to God’s role and gives an equally powerful and original reading of God’s part in the biblical story, and in the life of subsequent outcasts. For her it was a ‘great relief to turn from the earthly actors in the drama to... God, the ever just, and ever merciful’.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁷ *Lady of Shunem* (1894), p.88

⁹⁶⁸ Bell (1962) p.208

⁹⁶⁹ *Hour Before the Dawn* (1876) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp.243-308, p.295

⁹⁷⁰ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.81

Butler draws attention to a fact that goes unmarked by most commentators before or since: Hagar is the first woman in the Bible to be spoken to directly by God.⁹⁷¹

Republican Butler makes much of the fact that it is the ‘the ill-used slave’, ‘the rejected Hagar, alone, in the wilderness’ whom God addresses, and not the ‘Princess Sarah’.

This functions for Butler as the most important part of this narrative. It is this that has been her strength and consolation in her campaign, and it is this that ‘should wake up the whole Christian world to a truer and clearer view of life as it is around us’.⁹⁷²

The Womanist theologian Katie Cannon summarises Delores Williams as suggesting that the

‘biblical story which focuses on Sarah, wife of Abraham, is an inadequate model for Black women. She proposes Hagar, the slave woman, as the correlative of Black women’s experience.’⁹⁷³

Butler would have agreed with this in the twofold sense in which Williams sees it. For Butler, too, Hagar, who is ‘made use of for a time and purpose’, is a type of women’s oppression and exclusion, a sister ‘in the wilderness struggling for life’.⁹⁷⁴ Additionally, both Williams and Butler find hope in Hagar’s experience. Just like Williams, who sees Hagar ‘by the help of [her] God’ finding ‘survival/quality of life’ resources for herself and her son in the wilderness,⁹⁷⁵ Butler identifies the God who ‘twice granted’ to Hagar ‘just what she needed at the moment – guidance and sustenance’ and who ‘continued to

⁹⁷¹ Compare W. Brueggemann, (1982), p.152f, who does not mention this but says of Hagar’s naming of God that the obscure etiology ‘was not valued in the tradition and is best left in its obscurity’.

⁹⁷² *Lady of Shunem* (1894), p.82

⁹⁷³ K. G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*, (Atlanta, 1988) p.207

⁹⁷⁴ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.71; Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God Talk* (New York 1993) p.109

⁹⁷⁵ Williams (1993) p.109 and p.197, and pp.110-120

support and to lead her’, so that ‘the wilderness which became their home was no longer a wilderness to them’.⁹⁷⁶

Butler goes further in her criticism of Abraham and Sarah than Williams does, since she does not see them as models of behaviour for anyone – black or white. However Butler does not criticise the role of God in the narrative. In choosing to emphasize the importance of Hagar in God’s eyes, Butler overlooks the problematic nature of God’s command that Hagar should return to the abusive situation from which she had fled – a point not evaded by Exum. Loades too expresses concern that Butler’s emphasis elsewhere on submission could lead to women remaining in an abusive relationship.⁹⁷⁷

Liberationist

Butler’s anti-slavery stance has not been taken sufficiently into account in understanding the depth and breadth of her application of this passage. Tribble notices that Hagar is ‘the first runaway slave’ who flees from Sarah, just as the Israelites would later do from Pharaoh.⁹⁷⁸ Benckhuysen notes Butler’s abolitionist views⁹⁷⁹, but her empathy with Hagar and criticism of Abraham and Sarah is attributed to her ‘knowledge of the British class system’, and her use of the term ‘outcast’ is taken to equate to the prostitute.⁹⁸⁰ Once Butler’s passionate and informed anti-slavery stance is taken into account it is clear how her reading of the Hagar narratives would have been influenced. It is too narrow an identification to say that, in Butler’s paradigm, Abraham represents

⁹⁷⁶ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p. 90

⁹⁷⁷ Cheryl J Exum, ‘Trusting in the God of their Fathers: A Response to the Articles by Robert Knetsch and Amanda Benckhuysen’ in Calvert-Koyzis & Weir (2009), pp.49-56, 51; Loades (2001), pp.100, 101

⁹⁷⁸ Tribble & Russell (2006) p.40

⁹⁷⁹ Benckhuysen (2009) pp.17-32, p.19

⁹⁸⁰ Benckhuysen (2007) pp.135-148, p.144

men who frequent prostitutes.⁹⁸¹ In Butler's eyes, he can stand for any man treating a woman as a slave or oppressing her sexually.

Furthermore a primary aspect of state regulated prostitution for Butler was that the women had the status of slaves. Walkowitz argues that the 'enslavement of black people' provided Butler with 'an ideological paradigm of how the CD Acts had constructed a sanitized, "slave class of women"'.⁹⁸² Joel Quirk suggests that in the formative phase of Butler's campaign,

'the language of slavery was chiefly used as *rhetorical* device, which sought to establish a metaphorical connection between the collective status of prostitutes and the plight of chattel slaves',

and only later as the literal equivalent.⁹⁸³ However, for Butler it was more than an ideological paradigm or parallel. It really was slavery. Being deprived of their freedom and their rights and being depersonalised in having no control over the medical examination was slavery. As she argued in *The Constitution Violated* (1871) she was using the term slavery

'in its strictest legal sense. Slavery means that condition in which an individual is not master of his own person, and the condition of slavery is defined in the Magna Charta by the omission of all slaves from the rights which the charter grants to every one [sic] else.'⁹⁸⁴

How early she became aware of women and children being literally bought and sold, and moved from country to country or 'as slaves in chains from one brothel to another,

⁹⁸¹ Benckhuysen (2007) pp.135-148, p.141

⁹⁸² Walkowitz (1980), p.123

⁹⁸³ Joel Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project: From the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking* (Pennsylvania, 2011), p.218

⁹⁸⁴ *The Constitution Violated. An Essay* (Edinburgh, 1871) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.211-303, p.224

in Christian Europe',⁹⁸⁵ is not clear, but even if that had not been happening Butler would still have defined prostitution as literal slavery. She even regarded the treatment of the landless poor of Ireland as slavery, and quoted Whittier's 'Toussaint L'Ouverture' to further emphasise this overlap.⁹⁸⁶ In Cheltenham, Butler defended the right of a prostitute to work independently out of her home in the building where Butler was resident,⁹⁸⁷ and was opposed to trying to forcibly close down brothels, so she distanced herself from the later purity campaigns.⁹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, for Butler the prostitute governed by state regulated prostitution was one with the slave.

Although the huge influence of slavery on Butler's thought has been acknowledged in general terms, it is the argument of this thesis that the same must be true of Butler's biblical interpretation, which was fundamentally shaped by her opposition to slavery.⁹⁸⁹ Butler could not have agreed with Stowe or in any way have countenanced Abraham and Sarah's treatment of Hagar. Slavery in any form, patriarchal or not, only gave rise to an expression of disgust from Butler. But strangely, the identification in Butler's mind of the Egyptian slave Hagar with other women slaves is not taken into account when writing about Butler's exegesis of this narrative. It is as if slavery, prostitutes, and the Bible are all separate categories for Butler, or the commentator, and as if Victorian

⁹⁸⁵ *Grave Words to Electors & Non-Electors* (1876) in Jordan & Sharp, vol.3 pp.66-70, p.69 ; *A Call to Action* (1881) in Jordan & Sharp, vol.3 pp.160-170, p.160 and entire letter

⁹⁸⁶ *Our Christianity Tested by the Irish Question* (London, 1887), pp.5, 18

⁹⁸⁷ Letter from Josephine E Butler to Miss Forsaith, 1902, quoted in A. S. G. Butler (1954)

⁹⁸⁸ *Truth Before Everything* (Liverpool, 1897) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 3, pp. 334-358, p.340. For a discussion of Butler's relationship with the Purity Campaigns, see Sue Morgan, 'The Word Made Flesh: Women, Religion and Sexual Cultures', in Sue Morgan & Jacqueline de Vries, *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures, 1800-1940* (London, 2010), pp.159-187, pp.168,169

⁹⁸⁹ Helen Mathers 'The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler 1828-1906', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2 (April 2001), pp 282-312, p.289

Britain was all white. Despite the way Hagar was represented in European paintings, Butler must have thought of her as black and had in mind Holman Hunt's *The Afterglow in Egypt*,⁹⁹⁰ rather than Claude Gellée's *Landscape with Hagar and the Angel*.⁹⁹¹

George Butler was commended by the Royal Geographical Society for his services to Geography,⁹⁹² and Josephine copied maps of the Mediterranean for his lectures and demonstrated a far better knowledge of the Bible lands than some Oxford academics.⁹⁹³

The popularity of visits to the Holy Land⁹⁹⁴ and her sister Hatty's letters from Egypt whilst visiting her daughter and son-in-law there, all make it impossible for Butler to have excluded Hagar's skin colour from her thinking about the Egyptian maid.

David Dabydeen describes how intimately slavery and prostitution had been bound up. Men made rich by the slave trade, whether sailors or merchants, might spend their money on prostitutes. A prostitute could be punished by transportation to the colonies of the West Indies where she might continue in prostitution or become the mistress of a plantation owner, adding to the wealth of the colony and so on.⁹⁹⁵ Liverpool was a major seaport built on slave money, and Butler says African pupils attended her husband's school, which 'shared the characteristics of the city in the midst of which it was set.'⁹⁹⁶ It seems reasonable to conclude that the prostitute population did too. The 'tall dark girl' who recited the whole of John 14 from memory in the workhouse may well have been of slave descent and from one of the several black churches in

⁹⁹⁰ William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Afterglow in Egypt* (1861)

⁹⁹¹ Claude Gellée (1604-1682), *Landscape with Hagar and the Angel* (1646)

⁹⁹² *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.258

⁹⁹³ *ibid* p.77f

⁹⁹⁴ *ibid* p.167f

⁹⁹⁵ See David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Manchester, 1987), for a discussion of this cycle of life and for Hogarth's illustrations of it.

⁹⁹⁶ *Recollections* (1892) p.168

Liverpool.⁹⁹⁷ Benckhuysen demonstrates clearly Butler's 'imaginative identification' with Hagar, and it is interesting to note that it extends as far as using a word applied to Hagar's suffering to describe her own, and that of those she sought to help.⁹⁹⁸ In the biblical narrative, the word 'afflicted', used to describe Sarah's treatment of Hagar, which caused her to flee into the wilderness (Gen.16:6), is the same strong word that is used of the affliction of the Israelite slaves in Egypt (Ex.1:11). Butler chose this word to describe the suffering of those she felt compelled to seek out in Liverpool. After her own experience of suffering in the tragic death of Eva, Butler said she felt qualified to speak on the same level to others who were 'afflicted' – 'To say (as I now knew I could) to afflicted people "I too have suffered".'⁹⁹⁹

Butler did, as theologian Cheryl Exum says, appropriate the Hagar story 'for her purposes by reading it in the light of issues important to her'. However, prostitution was not the only issue of importance for Butler. As Benckhuysen realised, Butler had a wide definition of oppression:

'In the Bible I find the labourer deprived of just wages, the wronged widow, the neglected orphan the leper driven out of society... Their cry, it is said, enters into the ears of God.'¹⁰⁰⁰

In exploring the intriguing comparison of Butler with the womanist theologian Delores Williams and the mujerista theologian Elsa Tamez, Benckhuysen says that 'Butler, Tamez and Williams have found this story to be a source of empowerment for women'; they all employ a 'constructive re-reading' and each 'understood in a very personal way

⁹⁹⁷ *Recollections* (1892), p.184

⁹⁹⁸ Benckhuysen is using an expression coined by the theologian Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, 1992), pp.26-28. See Benckhuysen (2009) pp.17-32, p.18 f/n 5.

⁹⁹⁹ *Recollections* (1892), p.183

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Woman's Work* (1869), p.x.

what it means to be Hagar.¹⁰⁰¹ Benckhuysen argues that, for Williams, Hagar is the black woman oppressed by slavery and its legacy, and for Tamez, Hagar is the third world domestic worker oppressed by her mistress and preyed upon sexually by her master, and therefore under the three fold oppression of sexism, classism and racism.¹⁰⁰² The significance for Butler of Hagar's narrative is described as being an example of the 'classism' that she was fighting against in Victorian society.¹⁰⁰³ The implication is that Butler does not focus on racism, although, showing great sensitivity to Butler's voice, Benckhuysen says 'it is possible to imagine Butler grieving Hagar's three fold oppression' [of racism, sexism and classism] as identified by Tamez, and that in many ways Butler 'stands in solidarity' with Tamez and Williams.¹⁰⁰⁴

Further detailed knowledge of Butler's life has shown that it is possible to do more than 'imagine' Butler grieving over Hagar's threefold oppression. It is the argument of this thesis that the Typical Outcast for Butler also encompassed the domestic worker and the slave: Benjamin Jowett refused to help Butler to make an academic accountable for his behaviour in throwing out a servant he had made pregnant;¹⁰⁰⁵ and as Vice Chancellor he refused to let Butler address the students of Oxford.¹⁰⁰⁶ Butler and the Booths cite examples of women lured by the offer of respectable domestic work who in fact find

¹⁰⁰¹ Benckhuysen (2009) pp.17-32, p.29f. See Delores Williams, 'Hagar in African American Biblical Appropriation', in Phyllis Trible & Letty M. Russell (eds.), *Hagar, Sarah and Their Children* (Kentucky, 2006) pp. 171-184; Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God Talk* (New York 1993); Elsa Tamez, 'The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation' in J. S. Pobee & Barbel von Wartenberg-Potter, *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World* (Illinois, 1986) pp.5-17, and Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed* (New York, 1982)

¹⁰⁰² Benckhuysen (2009) pp.17-32, p. 23

¹⁰⁰³ *ibid* p.28

¹⁰⁰⁴ *ibid* p.24

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.98

¹⁰⁰⁶ Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Mr Wilson, March 25th 1873, WL

they are being recruited by a brothel. So when Tamez says of Hagar's treatment 'it is a scenario familiar to domestic servants today', Butler would have agreed.¹⁰⁰⁷

Furthermore, when Butler says

'Here are two women — one the lawful, respected, and respectable wife; the other... simply made use of for a time and purpose',

from her abolitionist standpoint she is excoriating Abraham and Sarah's treatment of the slave, Hagar. From the standpoint of opposition to the double standard, she is thundering against Abraham and Sarah's treatment of the abandoned mother and child.¹⁰⁰⁸

When Butler says that the world is full of 'Hagars' she has in mind the enslaved black woman, the domestic worker, the Indian women in the state regulated prostitution set up by the British Empire for the army in India,¹⁰⁰⁹ the women she knew of who were trafficked from Europe to New Orleans and others.¹⁰¹⁰ This invites further comparison with the theologies of other women reading from liberationist perspectives, and global theologies that recognise oppression in many different forms, whether they be sexism, racism or other.

Butler's Interpretive Strategies

In criticising other interpreters for being too complacent in their reading of this story, 'as if God himself had ordained each step in it, and Sarai had done well',¹⁰¹¹ Butler is asserting what was, for her, the fundamental principle of the unity of the moral law, and

¹⁰⁰⁷ Tamez (1986) pp.5-17, p.10

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.71

¹⁰⁰⁹ *ibid* p.74; *Mrs. Butler's Appeal to the Women of America. A Letter to the International Council of Women at Washington* (New York, 1888), p.17

¹⁰¹⁰ *Mrs. Butler's Appeal to the Women of America* pp.22-24

¹⁰¹¹ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.74

her interpretation of this narrative is guided by this. Paul's words in Christ there is 'neither slave nor free' (Gal.3:28) were a cornerstone of the trans-Atlantic campaign against slavery but Butler, as an abolitionist reader of slave narratives, notices that Paul falls short in his support of the cause of the female slave. It is necessary now to look at how she rebuts the apparent indifference of Paul to the plight of the outcast by employing exegetical methods familiar to later women interpreters such as a close reading of the text, retelling the parable of the Prodigal Son as the parable of the Prodigal Daughter, and making her own creedal statement on behalf of the outcast. She also implicitly interprets Paul against Paul as she reads using liberationist strategies from the perspective of the outcast.

In focusing on Hagar, Butler starts where women are, and the women she is beside are dying prostitutes, such as the 'older woman' who

'had been an enemy and oppressor to...young girls' who lay 'a mass of disease'... 'in 'the great dreary hospital' and [whispered]'hoarsely, "Tell me! tell me, is *there any hope for me?*"' ¹⁰¹²

In applying Hagar's story to the operation of the double standard in Victorian society, Butler reveals hidden women in the biblical text. By contrasting the prodigal son's treatment with that of the outcast woman, Butler reveals the prodigal daughter:

'all the cruelty, impurity, and avarice of earth combine to bar her return to the Father's (sic) house' ¹⁰¹³

Butler says the prodigal son goes forth of his own free will and with his share of the inheritance. However, the daughter as outcast is disinherited and no one even wants to know where she is. ¹⁰¹⁴ Butler's use of 'the Father' with a capital letter seems to connote

¹⁰¹² 'Memories', *The Storm-Bell*, June 1900, no.23, pp.307-311, p.310

¹⁰¹³ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.80

¹⁰¹⁴ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.186

that it is the outcast's way back to God that is being barred by human agency and Butler demands equal treatment for her.

Further hidden women in the text are revealed in the form of prostitutes, as Butler spectacularly employs the technique of reading against the grain by reading the text from the perspective of outcast women. These women include prostitutes – the prostitutes that Victorian society would have condemned, the prostitutes who were there in the text all along.¹⁰¹⁵ The prodigal son spends all he has on prostitutes, and the 19th Century reader would have condemned him and the prostitutes. But Butler's exposition is asking – if the prodigal son is welcomed back, why not the prostitutes too; are they too allowed to repent and return to the Father?

In a way prefiguring an interpretive strategy used by Alice Bach in the 20th Century, Butler brings women into the same room – some of whom Victorian society would have closed their doors and their Bibles on.¹⁰¹⁶ Bach states that she has allowed herself to 'create a community of women figures, rejecting the narrator's ploy of keeping women in the biblical texts isolated from each other'.¹⁰¹⁷ In *The Lady of Shunem* as a whole, several women are discussed, but not necessarily the ones that might be expected to be held up as exemplars by women authors of Victorian works of devotion. The Shunemite woman might be a conventional enough exemplar of faith and piety, however, the prostitute Rahab, and the concubines Rizpah and Hagar are also skilfully juxtaposed by Butler to indict the 'Sarah's' of this world. Marion Ann Taylor's verdict that 'Butler read Scripture carefully... from the victim's perspective, actually becoming

¹⁰¹⁵ See Luke 15:30, the complaint of the older son to his father that his brother had 'devoured thy living with harlots'

¹⁰¹⁶ Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge, 1997), p.27

¹⁰¹⁷ *ibid* p.27

the voice of the outcast', was cited earlier.¹⁰¹⁸ It is the argument of this thesis that in Butler's construction of her whole book, *The Lady of Shunem*, she does this par excellence, as she weaves together women's stories in what has previously been considered a modern way. The privileged position of the son and heir in the Shunemite woman's story (2 Kings 4:8-36) invites comparison with Ishmael and Hagar who are the disinherited (Genesis 21:10), leading Butler's reader, who, of course, sympathises with the respectable, bereaved mother of Shunem, to discover sympathy for the slave of Sarah, the prostitute of Jericho, and the concubine whose sons become dispensable at the word of the next man controlling her life.

What Butler had learned about the 'God of families' included the fact that the 'God of families', is revealed as not only with the respectable Shunemite mother, but also with Rahab the prostitute making a deal to secure her own survival and that of her family (Joshua 2:12-13).

The God who sees the ill-used slave alone in the wilderness – afflicted by her mistress, cast off by her master, unable to watch her son die – is the 'God of families' who also sees the concubine left to other men when her master dies, but who, as a mother protects the bodies of her sons even when they are dead (2 Samuel 21:8-14). This God is the root of Butler's 'outcast theology'.

The contrast between the 'God of families' and Paul is a clue to Butler's statement 'he was not a father', which she deploys as she, perhaps, tries to justify how the apostle could have been so thoughtless in portraying Hagar as an allegory rather than an

¹⁰¹⁸ Taylor (2010), pp.259-273, p.271

outcast.¹⁰¹⁹ Similarly, elsewhere Butler contrasted ‘the pathetic and paternal utterances’ of God with human indifference saying, “Thus saith the Lord”.¹⁰²⁰

A very significant resonance between Butler and liberationist theologians including Tamez is Butler’s repeated use of the expression ‘solidaire’.¹⁰²¹ If Hagar is a victim then so is Butler. However, unlike early second wave feminists such as Cheryl Exum, Butler does not focus solely on the fact that all women are oppressed by patriarchy.¹⁰²² Rather she protests against the particularly severe oppression of the outcast. Butler’s empathetic identification with the victim or outcast, seems to be as she co-suffers with her sisters, aware that Christ is suffering alongside her and them.

Butler, who was deeply mystical, wrote of the ‘companionship’ Christ ‘granted’ her, not ‘in the way that I expected’ but that of being able to turn her head whilst ‘bound hand and foot, stretched upon my cross, till every nerve and muscle strains and aches’ towards where her ‘Lord hangs, in pain also, so near that I can hear His breathing, His sighs, the beating of His heart, but separated by the Cross.’¹⁰²³ Her nephew drew attention to the fact that in reflecting on this perhaps mystical experience, she ‘characteristically... asserts Christ’s presence as a personal human presence, the presence of ‘the beautiful tender Man,’ as well as ‘the essence of the Godhead,’ and ‘the Creator of the Universe’.¹⁰²⁴

¹⁰¹⁹ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.74

¹⁰²⁰ *Woman's Work* (1869) p.xi

¹⁰²¹ See above, Chapter Seven, for a discussion of Butler’s use of this term.

¹⁰²² See Benckhuysen (2009), pp.17-32, p.24 f/n 35 , for her critique of Exum’s reading of the Hagar narrative

¹⁰²³ *Autobiographical Memoir* (1909), pp.276, 277.

¹⁰²⁴ A. S. G. Butler (1954), p.216f

In writing about the ‘recovery of the image of God’, Tamez speaks of the need to feel ‘the pulse of God “in the depths of Hell”’,¹⁰²⁵ and of experiencing grace on the garbage dump. Butler said ‘I have been in hell and would go there again for my sister’s sake’.

Her contemporary Henry Scott Holland said of her that

‘There was no hell on earth into which she would not willingly travel, if, by sacrifice of herself, she could reach a hand of help to those poor children whom nothing short of such sacrifice could touch.’¹⁰²⁶

It is with the descent into hell that she makes her most remarkable response to Paul.

Concerned for the fate of outcast women, only a small number of whom she has been able to help, Butler is comforted by the fact that though they are beyond her reach, they are not beyond the reach of God. Once more she applies a Christological focus as, quoting from the Epistles, Butler writes of Christ preaching to those in Hades. Then she adds her own credal statement, which is parallel to the statement in the Apostles’ Creed, ‘he descended to the dead’: ‘I believe’ that ‘Into the vilest prison-houses of earth... he descends alone many a time, to save those souls buried out of sight and ken of his servants and ministers’.¹⁰²⁷ Tellingly, Butler had some experience of prisons and she may be referring here to the women who were buried without ceremony beneath the floor deep in the St. Lazare prison, or she may have had in mind women locked up in brothels. Either way, in a manner similar to her introduction of Jesus into the Levite’s Concubine narrative she again brings Jesus into her interpretation of Hagar’s tale of terror.

¹⁰²⁵ Tamez (2002) p.132

¹⁰²⁶ Henry Scott Holland, *A Bundle of Memories* (London, 1915), p.287

¹⁰²⁷ *Lady of Shunem* (1894) p.83 She may be referring here to workmen burying a lot of women’s skeletons without ceremony beneath the floor deep in the St.Lazare prison. See ‘Brief Recollections of My Fellow-workers. No. III: Pauline de Grandpre’, *The Storm-Bell*, No. 12, February (1899) pp.137-141, p.137f.

Conclusion: Was Butler Influenced by Hearing The Voices Of African Americans?

As has been noted, scholars like Benckhuysen and Taylor have been intrigued by the resonances between Butler's biblical interpretation and that of later womanist and mujerista theologians and the expression proto-feminist has been applied to Butler. However, crucially, what has not been considered is whether Butler in turn was influenced to read in this way by her foremothers- notably African American ones. It is necessary now to turn to this question.

Renita Weems, the 20th Century African American Womanist theologian, labelled this story, 'A mistress, a maid, and no mercy'. Weems went on to say that for

'black women, the story of Hagar...is a haunting one.... Hagar's story is peculiarly familiar. It is as if we know it by heart.'¹⁰²⁸

Delores Williams traces the influence of the figure of Hagar in 19th Century African American culture.¹⁰²⁹ One of the largest recorded sale of slaves took place in Savannah Georgia in 1859 and Hagar was the most common biblical name for the females amongst the 436 men, women and children sold.¹⁰³⁰ Whether or not Butler had heard or

¹⁰²⁸ R. J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (New York, 1988), p.5

¹⁰²⁹ Delores S Williams, 'Hagar in African American Biblical Appropriation', in Tribble & Russell (2006) pp. 171-184, p.172,173

¹⁰³⁰ An advertisement in the *Christian Recorder* of 1866 is just one of very many placed by slaves and former slaves trying to trace their children who had been sold away and is illustrative of the treatment of Hagar's in the USA during Ante-bellum slavery. See 'Hagar Outlaw', *Christian Recorder*, 7 April 1866, <http://www.yale.edu/glc/missing/043.htm> accessed 15 00 28 4 12

read anti-slavery material which had employed the figure of Hagar, Butler, too, knew this story from the slave narratives she had read and the outcast women she had befriended. In drawing attention to the racial and sexual oppression of women through the Hagar story; in her understanding that evil is powerfully present in situations of oppression; and in her understanding that God is there in the struggle alongside Hagar, she incorporates key concepts of womanist theology. Williams states that feminist and womanist bible interpreters find a 'liberating word' in the Bible but that 'women have to turn over many layers to get to this liberating word'. In expounding the narrative of Hagar, Butler did just that and in reading from Hagar's point of view found resources very similar to those of womanists.¹⁰³¹ Was Butler influenced to read this way by the slave narratives?

In her exploration of 19th Century women who used the Bible to argue for greater rights for women, Marla Selvidge, writing about Maria W. Stewart, said 'God was on the side of the oppressed, the hopeless. A woman brought this message to them.'¹⁰³² This statement could equally apply to Butler, and the question remains to be explored: to what extent was Butler influenced by the voices of the enslaved and formerly enslaved? Did she learn from the biblical interpretation and praxis of slaves or free black women such as Stewart? As was argued in Chapter Two such materials were readily available to one, like Butler, from a highly literate anti-slavery family which was part of a network of those of similar interests. Accounts from 'first sources' in slave narratives and in the speeches of Stewart must have been known and transmitted by the women engaged in Butler's abolitionist cause.

¹⁰³¹ Williams (1993) p.187

¹⁰³² Maria Selvidge, *Notorious Voices: Feminist Biblical Interpretation, 1500-1920* (New York, 1996), p.210

So what might Butler have heard as she listened to those voices? Examples have been given of speech about the general tenor of slavery and the treatment of female slaves but what theological statements were made by the black women that resonate with Butler's beliefs? The slave narratives make clear that the way the enslaved women read the Bible was different to the way their enslavers read it. As Elaine Brown Crawford says of Harriet Jacob's narrative,

'Jacob's master's reference to "your infernal Bible" suggests that he had discerned that the slaves' religion, and their appropriation of the Bible, was different from his.'¹⁰³³

Brown Crawford also draws attention to the fact that, not only were there two Bibles at work, but two gods were apparent – the Christian God and the slave master, 'who felt that *he* was God' in the life of his female slave.'¹⁰³⁴ Reciprocally, Sojourner Truth testified to the fact that

'she looked upon her master as a *God*; and believed that he knew of and could see her at all times, even as God himself.'¹⁰³⁵

Two churches were also identified in the narratives. For Sojourner Truth, there was the 'religion of Jesus' and the 'religion of America'. For Jacobs, there was the 'religion of the South' and there was Christianity, and in a confrontational challenge that Butler would surely have echoed, she asked 'Are doctors of divinity blind or are they hypocrites?'¹⁰³⁶

Apart from this theological analysis of the Bible, God and the Church, the voices of the oppressed black women spoke of their relation to God: of God's direct revelation to

¹⁰³³ A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology*, (Louisville, 2002), p.31

¹⁰³⁴ *ibid* p.31

¹⁰³⁵ *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York, 1850), p.33

¹⁰³⁶ Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861), p.114

them as women which was prior to their appropriation of the written text of the Bible. In the uniquely poignant moment of losing to the wider world of slavery the child that she had carried and borne, Old Elizabeth's mother's parting words to her were that Elizabeth had 'nobody in the world to look to but God.'¹⁰³⁷ Black women asserted that, in despair they had cried out to him with hope as slim as one strand of hair, yet believing it would be sufficient. Crawford demonstrates that out of that despair these women had 'hope in the holler'.¹⁰³⁸

Black women also insisted on their humanity in Sojourner Truth's words – 'Ain't I a woman?'¹⁰³⁹ They insisted on their rights over their own bodies and their right to keep their own children. They led the way as resistant readers who challenged the prevailing orthodoxy of white male reading of Scripture. So Jarena Lee (b.1783), who was the subject of the first published narrative by an African American woman in 1836, argued that Jesus was a 'whole saviour' who had saved women as well as men and had given Mary the task of witnessing to the resurrection alongside 'unlearned fishermen'.¹⁰⁴⁰ She asserted her right to interpret and proclaim God's word:

'The Lord gave his handmaiden power to speak, for his great name, for he arrested the hearts of the people, and caused a great shaking amongst the multitude, for God was in the midst.'¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³⁷ Quoted by Brown Crawford (2002), p.27

¹⁰³⁸ *ibid* pp.27 & 82

¹⁰³⁹ For a discussion of Sojourner Truth's use of dialect, and of the origins of the anti-slavery motto 'I am a Woman and a Sister', see Nell Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York, 1996), Part III

¹⁰⁴⁰ Jarena Lee quoted in Jacquelyn Grant *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Theology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, 1989), p.219. See Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel* (Philadelphia, 1836)

¹⁰⁴¹ Jarena Lee (1836) p.29

Maria W. Stewart argued that God raises up prophets and redeemers: ‘Didn’t God use Esther?’ she asked, and Deborah and Mary Magdalene, and in this way justified her own preaching in the light of God’s revelation.

Delores Williams stated that the ‘central message of womanist theology goes to the race, class and gender critique.’¹⁰⁴² Black women like Williams, and those in the 19th Century, put their experience first: they know God through their experience prior to hearing of his revelation in the Bible, and judge that revelation in the light of their experience. Baker-Fletcher says that Sojourner Truth wanted to ‘compare the teachings of the Bible with the witness within her.’ She ‘trusted in the witness within her to interpret scripture in relation to her personal and social-historical context.’¹⁰⁴³

As a slave woman, Howard Thurman’s grandmother heard many sermons from Scriptures instructing slaves to obey their masters and her reaction was to promise God that if she ever learned to read she was not going to read biblical passages instructing slaves to obey their masters.¹⁰⁴⁴ Crawford rightly states that

‘A major resistance strategy developed by the slaves was counter-cultural theology. In using the term *counter-cultural theology*, I am asserting that slaves appropriated and applied Scripture according to their own understanding of , or engagement with, the Bible, and their interpretations often countered the theology of the dominant, oppressive culture.’¹⁰⁴⁵

What the slaves did in developing a counter-cultural theology against the domination of the slave owners, feminist theologians subsequently did in developing a counter-cultural theology against the domination of men. 20th Century womanist theologians such as

¹⁰⁴² Quoted in Maureen E. Fiedler, *Breaking Through the Stained Glass Ceiling: Women Religious Leaders in Their Own Words* (New York, 2010), p.72

¹⁰⁴³ K. Baker-Fletcher, ‘Ann Julia Cooper and Sojourner Truth: Two Nineteenth Century Black Feminist Interpreters of Scripture’ in E. Schussler Fiorenza (ed.) *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction* (New York, 1993) pp.41-51, p. 48

¹⁰⁴⁴ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, 1949)

¹⁰⁴⁵ Brown Crawford (2002) p.28

Jacquelyn Grant framed three criticisms of feminist theologians. Firstly, whilst agreeing that women's experience shapes their theology, womanists object that all women are not the same and that they experience white women as part of their oppression. Secondly, they maintain that any references to 'sisterhood' by feminist theologians must be a joke or an apology from the dominating class. Thirdly, they argue that the sources used by feminist theologians are white sources.¹⁰⁴⁶

In contradistinction to these criticisms, it is highly likely that Butler included among her sources writings by African American women: slave narratives, poems, speeches as well as reading Hagar's narrative as a narrative of an enslaved woman. Furthermore, whilst Maria W. Stewart charged her 'fairer sisters whose hands were never soiled and nerves were never strained, to go learn by experience', Butler did just that as she sat on the damp floor in the Bridewell oakum shed and unpicked ropes till her fingers bled. And Butler's fundamental assertion that sisters are 'solidaire' was genuinely all encompassing. She included the ex-procurer Rebecca Jarrett, the dying prostitutes, the infanticide and the French Revolutionary, Louise Michel, who dropped the Bible overboard as a sign of her complete rejection of its God and its message.¹⁰⁴⁷

Similarly, Cannon identifies three key concepts in the theology of Martin Luther King – and of Howard Thurman, an important influence upon him – love, justice and community, all central to the *imago dei*.¹⁰⁴⁸ All of these were Butler's key theological principles and inspired her praxis. Before 20th Century feminist theology and 20th Century womanist theology, with their different emphases, Butler was leading the way

¹⁰⁴⁶ Jacquelyn Grant *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, 1989) p.195-200

¹⁰⁴⁷ 'A Dangerous Revolutionary', *The Stormbell* No8 Oct.1898, p.85-87

¹⁰⁴⁸ K. Cannon quoted in J. Grant (1989), p.208

in reading the Bible from the point of view of women – all women, including outcast women, black and white, as a resistant reader.

The parallel is there between chattel slavery and Butler's campaign against the status of outcast women – hence, of course, Butler's naming of her crusade as abolition, and the instant recognition of the validity of the name. However, has enough significance been accorded to the theological parallel which stemmed from hearing two different Bibles teach two completely different views of God, and of the value of human beings, whether 'master' or 'slave'? To a certain extent two different Bibles were being heard in any of the human rights debates of the Victorian era. But women were being heard to speak in biblical language particularly clearly about sexual oppression and the presence of God as their only source of hope in the context of opposition to slavery. The very fact that they were testifying and speaking out openly was taken as evidence that they were called to prophesy against their oppression.

Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that the influence of anti-slavery, which 'it is impossible to over-exaggerate', showed itself most importantly in Butler's approach to the Bible, and in her interpretation of it, 'as under the eye of God', in an independent and 'womanly, motherly' way. In her interpretation of 'the typical outcast' as Hagar, who named God 'the one that sees', in her insertion of the prophetic statement, 'I believe [Christ] descends alone many a time' to the side of the lone woman in hell, Butler has caught the spirit of womanist theology. In her prophesying she lived it out, in as much as a white woman who had not herself experienced the triple oppression of race, class and sex could. Trible argued that what she found in the Bible witnessed

‘to the transcendent Creator who is neither male nor female nor a combination of the two. Only in the context of this Otherness can we truly perceive the image of God male *and* female.’¹⁰⁴⁹

Butler’s work also challenged prevailing Christian thought and biblical exposition in a similar way to Trible’s *Texts of Terror*. Unlike Trible, Butler did not limit herself to Old Testament texts when giving her interpretation but, rather, brought them into conversation with New Testament texts and her conviction that Christ is the Liberator. In this way she gave a more profoundly Christian interpretation than Trible. Looking at this work from the perspective of the ‘texts of terror’ debate, one is amazed by the force of Butler’s attack on what would be described today as the sexual exploitation of Hagar in a patriarchal society. Even more striking is the originality of her application of her exposition to indict the society in which she lived. Similarly emphatic is her focus on the agency of God on behalf of the outcast, whether visible to human eye or not. It is this that gives her strength when faced with terror in the text or the overwhelming destruction of lives in the world around her.

Seemingly anticipating that her interpretation may be regarded as marginal compared with that of the apostle Paul, Butler feigns deference saying, ‘My reading of it may be only a motherly, a womanly reading of it, and theologically worthless. Be it so!’ Although Butler’s use of the expression ‘a motherly reading’ may at first sight appear deferential to the authorised theologians, and self-deprecating in its domestic grounding, she clearly linked it with Deborah’s prophetic leadership role when faced with male failure to obey God’s command. When Butler asked the Americans, Mrs. Andrew and Dr. Katharine Bushnell, to investigate state regulated prostitution in India, the very existence of which was denied by the British authorities, she gave them the title

¹⁰⁴⁹ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Minneapolis, 1984), p.201.

‘Mothers in Israel’ to accord their status as truth tellers and advocates for the oppressed women.¹⁰⁵⁰ As ‘Mothers in Israel’ they stood as advocates for the ‘Queen’s daughters’ and condemned their treatment, thus claiming the authority to question the Queen and those with whom she shared power.

Stating that people seek in the Bible a source of alternative value systems,

Brueggemann and Donahue claim that

‘It is a time for pursuit of fresh hints, for exploration of new intuitions which may reach beyond old conclusions, set categories, and conventional methods.’ It is time for ‘literature...which seriously challenges not only our conclusions but the shape of our questions.’¹⁰⁵¹

Phyllis Tribble summed up her work in the words, ‘Focusing on texts in the Hebrew Scriptures, I have sought a theological vision for new occasions.’¹⁰⁵² Josephine Butler similarly sought for a vision beyond that of her fellows who saw the outcast women as irredeemable, and the biblical interpretation she produced challenged the categories and changed the questions that were being asked of the text.

Mrs. Butler’s Bible

In giving his verdict on the *The Lady of Shunem*, that Butler’s biblical interpretation shows that the Bible must be interpreted by women as well as men in order for its message to be properly understood, Hugh Price Hughes was recognising the significance of Butler’s gendered exposition. Whether he knew of the interview Butler gave to the *Humanitarian* which was published in the same month and extracted by W. T. Stead in *The Review of Reviews* beneath Stead’s sensational heading – ‘WANTED-

¹⁰⁵⁰ ‘In Ramah was There a Voice Heard... Rachel Weeping for Her Children’, *Storm-Bell*, June 1893 pp.58-60, Jordan and Sharp vol.5 p.585-587, p.587

¹⁰⁵¹ W. Brueggemann & J. R. Donahue, SJ, ‘Series Foreword’ in Tribble (1978), pp.x, xi

¹⁰⁵² Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, 1978) p.xvi

LADIES AS BIBLICAL CRITICS!’ – is not known.¹⁰⁵³ However, it was equally significant and trenchant in giving a woman’s perspective on the Bible and its interpretation. Furthermore, Butler was being consciously ‘audacious’ in stating that ‘sex bias’ had played a part in the selection of the content of the canon of Scripture and that what was needed was dropping ‘sex prejudice’ and putting ‘our hearts and intellects together as men and women.’¹⁰⁵⁴

Butler quoted another Whittier poem and called for women to become ‘profound students of Scripture, accomplished Hebrew and Greek scholars, and versed in the principles of true criticism...really learned interpreters’ since ‘Men have had it all their own way for long enough.’¹⁰⁵⁵ Stead said she ‘has no words strong enough’ to condemn what he calls

‘the rascally revisers who print the story of the woman taken in adultery in brackets, and who cast doubts upon its authority, because it was left out of earlier manuscripts by men who could not bear to have the same standard of morality applied to both sexes’.¹⁰⁵⁶

Whilst Butler does not want to remove any books from the canon of Scripture, there are some she feels that ‘sex-bias’ has kept out of the canon. So she says

¹⁰⁵³ W. T. Stead (ed.) ‘Mrs .Josephine Butler’s Bible’, *The Review of Reviews* (Dec. 1894) pp.570-571; extracted from Sarah Tooley, ‘The Sex Bias of the Commentators: An Interview with Mrs. Josephine Butler’, *The Humanitarian* vol. 5 (Dec. 1894) No.6 pp.413-420.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Tooley (1894) pp.413-420 p.415, 416, 417

¹⁰⁵⁵ See Katharine Bushnell’s autobiography for an example of a woman who at Butler’s suggestion gave up campaigning against prostitution and engaged in seven years study of the bible becoming an influential biblical teacher. Both women see this as vital to ending the ‘subjection’ of women in the churches and the sexual double standard. Dr. Katharine Bushnell, *A Brief Sketch of Her Life Work* (Hertford, 1932)

¹⁰⁵⁶ Stead (1894) pp.570-571, p.571. Butler is here referring to John 7:53-John 8:11 which was left out of some manuscripts of the Bible.

‘While I believe in a large sense in the inspiration of the scriptures, I do not believe in the direct inspiration of the council of men who decided as to what should be canonical.’¹⁰⁵⁷

She asks why include Joseph and Potiphar’s wife but not Susannah? Why exclude Judith killing the two elders?¹⁰⁵⁸ ‘Doubtless’, Butler says, ‘the learned council’ decided *The First Book of Esther* was ‘an admirable example to set before women’ but *The Second Book of Esther* ‘in which the real woman shows herself’ and ‘in which the soul of the woman arises in revolt against the drunken and licentious monarch, who owns her as his chattel, they shake their heads in doubt.’ So the prayer of Esther ‘one of the most beautiful outpourings of a woman’s heart ever penned [is] excluded from the Scriptures.’¹⁰⁵⁹

Sarah Tooley, the journalist who interviewed Butler, makes clear that ‘under her husband’s guidance’ Josephine had ‘become familiar with the Greek text’, and that study of the Scriptures and biblical criticism ‘remained Mrs. Butler’s favourite study for leisure hours.’¹⁰⁶⁰ Given Butler’s high profile, outspoken interpretation on the topic of women in biblical narratives, and her Trans-Atlantic connections, it has seemed surprising that she did not contribute to *The Woman’s Bible*. However, the discovery of this interview with *The Humanitarian* reveals why this was so. Butler says that she was ‘once consulted with regard to’ *The Woman’s Bible*. She did not endorse it since she believed ‘it might be just as pharisaical and one-sided’ as a book written by men alone.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Stead (1894) pp.570-571, p.570

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Susannah and the Elders, The Second Book of Esther and Judith* are Deuterocanonical. *Humanitarian* p.416, makes clear that Butler rejects some of the Deuterocanonical books and does not want to exclude any books already in the canon.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Tooley (1894) pp.413-420, p.417

¹⁰⁶⁰ Tooley (1894) pp.413-420, p.413, presumably a reference to the text of the New Testament. However, it could also include the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint.

Thus, she is consistent in her assertion that men and women together have the best perspective on any matter.¹⁰⁶¹ Had she decided to contribute to *The Woman's Bible*, her lively views on 'rascally revisers' would surely have been included.

In her introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, Elisabeth Jay writes of the importance of literature 'making us confront complacent habits of reading biblical narrative as fossilized religious discourse, remote from our interpretation of the world around us.'¹⁰⁶² David Jasper gives John Coulson's opinion that literature in the 19th Century confronted the questions that '*should* have concerned the theologians'.¹⁰⁶³ Mrs. Gaskell's novel *Ruth* (1853) was surely one such work of literature. There is a striking contrast between the Josephine Butler who sat silently in her Oxford drawing room listening to male theologians condemning *Ruth* and the Josephine Butler who accused the 'learned men' of not being able to 'bear to have the same standard of morality applied to both sexes', when they cast doubt on the canonicity of the narrative of the woman taken in adultery. By 1894 Butler was taking on the theological 'old-boy network' at their own game – not that she wished to silence

¹⁰⁶¹ Butler expressed the same sentiment in *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* p.lvi. Priscilla Bright McLaren and Ursula Bright – two of Butler's colleagues in her campaigns and related to her close friends, the Priestman sisters – were British contributors to *The Woman's Bible*. This provides a likely scenario for Butler's opinion or involvement to be sought. See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 'Revising Committee', *The Woman's Bible* (New York, 1895. Reprinted Seattle, 1974), p.3. For the Bright, Priestman & McLaren family tree, see E. Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London, 1999) p.768.

¹⁰⁶² Elisabeth Jay, 'Now and in England', in A. W. Hass, D. Jasper, E. Jay (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology* (Oxford, 2007) pp. 3-14, p.5. Jay was writing of the role of art in doing this.

¹⁰⁶³ John Coulson, quoted in David Jasper, 'The Study of Literature and Theology' in A. W. Hass, D. Jasper, E. Jay (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology* (Oxford, 2007) pp.15-35, p.21

them but that she wanted a woman's opinion to be heard. As Alice Bach says 'Only a silent woman presents no risk.'¹⁰⁶⁴

At this point, another document of a much earlier date relating to Butler's biblical interpretation, in which she takes on the views of an Oxford theologian, needs to be discussed here. Whether or not Butler regarded Benjamin Jowett as 'rascally', she corresponded with him about how to read the Bible, so she needs to be included as one of the 'few exceptions' to the rule that for 19th Century women Bible interpreters, 'scholars were neither their dialogue partners nor their targeted readership.'¹⁰⁶⁵ An extant letter from Butler to Jowett has been quoted by scholars, but no one appears to have asked how it relates to Jowett's contribution to the, at the time, controversial volume, *Essays and Reviews* (1860).¹⁰⁶⁶ Butler's letter is undated but judged by the librarian cataloguing her correspondence as being written between 1860 and 1870.¹⁰⁶⁷ In it she refers to a previous letter from Jowett, and the librarian's comment is that Butler's letter

'is a reply to a letter or article of Jowett's as she starts off with "I quite agree with you that there are not many people who do justice to both sides of religion which you speak of" '.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Bach (1997) p.29 The expression 'ideological old-boy network that has held the Bible in thrall' is used by Bach p.32.

¹⁰⁶⁵ C. de Groot, and M. A. Taylor (eds.), *Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women Interpreters of the Bible* (Atlanta, 2007), p.10

¹⁰⁶⁶ See Ann Summers, *Female Lives, Moral States: Women, Religion and Public Life in Britain 1800-1930* (Newbury, 2000), p.9; and Helen Mathers, 'The Evangelical Spirituality of a Victorian Feminist: Josephine Butler 1828-1906', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 2 (April 2001), pp 282-312, p.302 and p.304

¹⁰⁶⁷ 'Copy of a letter to Mr. Jowett from Mrs. J. Butler', (No date) WL. This dating would be broadly consistent with Butler's remark in her letter about how she educates her boys, the oldest of whom would have been between eight and eighteen in this time span, and the youngest between two and twelve.

However, a comparison between Jowett's chapter in *Essays and Reviews* and the subject matter of the letter suggests that it could be both a reply to an earlier letter and a response to *Essays and Reviews*. It could also be a riposte to a withering verdict Jowett passed on her use of the Bible whilst resident in Oxford. Given the wide readership *Essays and Reviews* had in clerical circles and the Butler's personal friendship with some of the contributors, it seems entirely likely that she read it. Clearly she did read scholarly books and quotes Swinburne and Comte in this letter. Also George made notes on recent biblical scholarship which he updated from time to time. Nothing in the letter is inconsistent with it being part of a dialogue with Jowett about his chapter on the understanding of Scripture, and much in it resonates with his themes, notably her repeated references to 'the Truth'. Butler's opening remark fits Jowett's theme that there are two approaches to religion – one whereby truth is arrived at through scholarship and the other through a mystical apprehension of religious truth.¹⁰⁶⁸

Jowett says that he respects those who are not scholars, but he emphasises the validity of scholars' quest after truth, even if its discoveries are controversial. Butler says that she teaches her sons to value the work of such men and applauds those who search 'after Truth', but she eventually moves the argument on to say that not everyone can be a scholar and that it must be possible for them to know God, too. In arguing that God makes Himself known to those who seek Him, she quotes Jesus words – "When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide you into all Truth". Then, very tellingly, she quotes something that Jowett had previously told her. Butler writes,

¹⁰⁶⁸ Benjamin Jowett, 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', in J. W. Parker (ed.), *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1860) pp. 330-433, p.332

‘But I refrain from quoting even Christ’s words, remembering that you told me that Truth is not “assertions taken from Scripture”’.¹⁰⁶⁹

Mathers takes this to mean that Butler agreed with Jowett, but surely in her previous sentence Butler has just done precisely what Jowett objects to, namely, quoted the words of Jesus as an ‘assertion taken from Scripture’ to evidence her belief that the Holy Spirit is the one who will guide Jowett and others ‘into all Truth’? Butler is going to make assertions from Scripture, but having shown her awareness that Jowett does not accept that line of argument, she moves on to suggest that experience is the way to find God. She urges wise men to address God personally and not just rely on secondary sources.

What is of interest here is that Butler is recalling a remark made to her personally by Jowett, a remark designed to contradict Butler’s belief that quotations from Scripture, such as the words of Christ, are the basis of truth. Butler does not say when he made this remark but the words she recalls and the context in which she is recalling them – to Jowett’s memory as much as to her own – fit her comments about the one-sided view of matters that scholars expressed in her Oxford drawing room, which she attributed to their lack of mixing with the non-academic world and to the fact that they did not have a real understanding of women.¹⁰⁷⁰ In her letter to Jowett Butler suggests that ‘clever men who do not know intimately the hearts of many women’ generalise that women find religious faith easier than men. This chimes in with a comment she made in an otherwise very gracious letter she sent to Jowett’s posthumous biographer, about his

¹⁰⁶⁹ ‘Copy of a letter to Mr. Jowett from Mrs. J. Butler’, (No date) WL, p.3

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Recollections of George Butler* (1892), p.94. George’s apposite remark ‘Poor things they know no better’ was also made about Oxford men in this context.

‘somewhat defective *experience*’ being responsible for the inequitable way he regarded men and women:

‘he never seemed to give any man up as hopeless, or beyond the reach of sympathy and help. It was different as regards unhappy or vicious women.’¹⁰⁷¹

Butler wrote of her time in Oxford that a

‘few remarks made on those evenings stand out in my memory. They may seem slight and unimportant, but they had a significance for me, linking themselves, as they did, to long trains of thought which for some years past had been tending to form my own convictions.’

Over the next few pages she relates the Ruth discussion, the infanticide being taken into her home, the circus girl incident and her visit to Jowett to seek his advice which resulted in the ‘it is dangerous to rouse a sleeping lion’ dictum.

She then relates the incident in which the ‘educated man’ to whom she addressed a remark about a ‘present wrong’ being set right in the future because ‘Christ had said it would’, looked down upon her ‘with a smile of pity, almost of contempt, and said: " But you surely don't imagine that we regard as of any authority the grounds upon which you base your belief?"’¹⁰⁷² Though Butler does not name the man it seems entirely possible that it was Jowett and that some years later she decided to remind him of his words. In contrast to the earlier occasion, by this time she must have felt that she had the ‘dialectics at command’ to defend ‘the truth’.¹⁰⁷³

Jowett’s view that the object of a reader of the Bible ‘is to read Scripture like any other book with a real interest not merely a conventional one’, was controversial at the time and has been much commented on.¹⁰⁷⁴ Jowett wanted the reader to be able like a

¹⁰⁷¹ Geoffrey Faber, *Jowett. A Portrait with Background* (London, 1957), p.92 n.19

¹⁰⁷² *Recollections* (1892), p.98

¹⁰⁷³ *ibid.* p.95

¹⁰⁷⁴ Jowett (1860) pp. 330-433, p.338. See Taylor & Weir (2006) p.12, 14

disciple of Jesus or Paul- 'to open his eyes and see or imagine things as they truly are.'¹⁰⁷⁵ In her 1894 *Humanitarian* interview Butler seems to acknowledge Jowett's approach when she says that one reason for

'wide feeling of revolt against both the morality and the teaching of the Old Testament', (is) 'that people do not bring to the reading of the Scriptures the good sense and discrimination, in fact, the philosophic method, which scholars bring to bear in reading any other book.'

However, this follows her first reason for some people being repelled by the Old Testament:

'the loss of that high moral tone and spiritual refinement which the voice of woman would have brought into scriptural criticism.'¹⁰⁷⁶

In her view, people have been taught by male theologians 'to reverence wholesale all the characters in Scripture', but Butler implies that women would have been sure to teach that 'Bible characters are not all sinless persons, and that nowhere does divine teaching condone sin'.¹⁰⁷⁷ Women biblical scholars unlike men would have been prepared to criticise male Biblical characters.

Clearly much more could be said in a comparison of Butler and Jowett's approach to biblical interpretation and the applications they made of it. What can be said here is that, once again, what Butler saw in the text was different to what Jowett saw because she was looking not so much through the eyes of the 'disciples' or of the educated scholar but through the eyes of the outcast. Her 'imaginative identification' was with the women whom she believed Jesus treated as no other man had done. Given his subsequent attempt to dissuade Florence Nightingale from supporting Butler's campaign, and his refusal to let her address undergraduates, it seems that Jowett was not

¹⁰⁷⁵ Jowett (1860) pp. 330-433, p.338

¹⁰⁷⁶ Tooley (1894) pp.413-420, p.414

¹⁰⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.415

persuaded by her arguments over the years.¹⁰⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it is of real interest that Butler was attempting to sway him and alter his approach to biblical interpretation and faith. Jowett's dialogue with Florence Nightingale on such matters has been given more attention, but Butler's trajectory from silent and silenced woman in her Oxford drawing room to outspoken critic of the 'sex-bias' of biblical commentators via entering the *Essays and Reviews* debate is a compelling one for further investigation. Elisabeth Jay says that in the 19th Century there was 'a decisive shift in wresting the theological debate from the control of the clerisy'.¹⁰⁷⁹ Although Jay was referring more to the contribution of novelists, an examination of Butler's biblical interpretation and public theology on behalf of the outcast shows Jay's point to be entirely true.

In 2012 Carol Newsom stated that 'the future of biblical interpretation, however it may develop, in whatever contexts, can no longer proceed without making gender a central category of its hermeneutical work'.¹⁰⁸⁰ Clearly this is a point that Butler had already grasped.

Mathers has suggested that no 'judgements about Josephine Butler should be made on the basis of the work of her last years alone'.¹⁰⁸¹ However, as this thesis has demonstrated, from the perspective of interest in her biblical interpretation and public theology, *The Lady of Shunem*, the articles in the Salvation Army publications, and her interview in the *Humanitarian* all prove to be of extraordinary importance and to open

¹⁰⁷⁸ See V. Quinn and J. Prest (eds.), *Dear Miss Nightingale* (Oxford, 1987), p.179; and Letter of Josephine E. Butler to Mr Wilson, March 25th 1873, WL

¹⁰⁷⁹ Elisabeth Jay, 'Now and in England', in A. W. Hass, D. Jasper, E. Jay (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology* (Oxford, 2007) pp. 3-14, p.5.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Carol A. Newsom, 'Women as Biblical Interpreters Before the Twentieth Century', in Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe & Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, 2012) pp.1-24, p.22

¹⁰⁸¹ Mathers (2001), pp 282-312, p.310

up new perspectives on Butler as an independent and audacious female voice. Her earlier remarks, quoting George about biblical criticism ‘being too apt to take the place of profitable reading’, clearly should not be taken to mean that neither of them actively engaged in it.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁸² *Recollections of George Butler* (1892) p.348

CONCLUSION

Through an examination of Butler's core self-understanding as the voice of the outcast her representative, this thesis has explored the influences upon her reading of the Bible and shown their outworking in her biblical interpretation and public theology. A more detailed knowledge of her history has informed a better understanding of her theology. Thinking theologically about her biblical interpretation and its place in the history of biblical interpretation has informed fresh perspectives on her overall historical significance.

Building upon previous scholarship which has shown the importance of anti-slavery thinking and activity for women's consciousness of their own rights, this thesis has deepened the understanding of anti-slavery influence on Butler. It has been shown that she walked not just in her father's footsteps but those of her paternal aunts, as they published on the topic and, in the case of Aunt Margaretta, made a significant intervention in contemporary controversy about women's participation in political agitation. Furthermore, the stylish rhetoric and forceful tones in which Margaretta made it, and the underlying appeal which she and Mary made to the Bible, must be considered as influences upon Butler's campaign.

The importance Butler placed on Whittier's poetry has been demonstrated through showing how often she chose to quote it and through exploration of the themes which resonated with her concerns and beliefs. Importantly, it was argued that the influence of anti-slavery was not just in terms of campaigning for justice in the face of oppression. Rather, it was the biblical understanding and interpretation that undergirded the anti-slavery beliefs of John, Margaretta and Mary Grey and Whittier and Oberlin that Josephine inherited and that shaped her thinking.

A clear appreciation of the role of the Bible in her anti-slavery thinking was, in turn, shown to be crucial to a better understanding of her exposition of the Hagar narratives. This thesis has shown that, for Butler, Hagar represented not just prostitutes or only those who fell afoul of the sexual double standard in Victorian times, as previous scholars have assumed, but that also she represented any woman being oppressed by men or women with power over her life and that of her child, including the slave. Thus, the suggestion that Butler's thought has striking resonances with later feminist, womanist and mujerista theologians is seen to be true in a much more powerful way because of her wide definition of the oppression of Hagar. This thesis has importantly argued that Butler's thinking about the outcast, including Hagar, does not just prefigure later womanist thought but was influenced by hearing the voices of her black foremothers in the slave narratives and in speeches. Transatlantic influence on women like Butler was not just from white women and men. Furthermore, in assessing the history of biblical interpretation with regard to Nineteenth Century women interpreters, it has shown that anti-slavery effort must not be regarded as a distraction from the task of biblical interpretation but as a *locus classicus* of it. Future research on the network of influences between women bible interpreters in the Nineteenth Century must take into consideration the importance of the influence of women of slave descent.

In re-evaluating, through the lens of the outcast, the impact of Oxford on Butler, it was argued that the actual historical circumstances of the regulation of prostitution in this university town in the 1850s must be given more weight as a powerful influence on Butler's identification with the outcast and her recognition that tackling the sexual double standard of morality was imperative if reform for women was to take place. Arthur Engel's research and the parallel concerns of Butler's contemporary, Felicia

Skene, were adduced to show that male celibate Oxford was a place where Butler not only experienced sexism in the form of having her opinions discounted, but was, in fact, a place where what Butler saw as sexual immorality, hypocrisy and systemic abuse of power was an accepted part of university life, and one which men like Jowett refused to address. Exploration of her personal history around the time when she was writing *The Lady of Shunem* (1894) has demonstrated the benefits, in terms of understanding and contextualising her thought, that come from a more in depth appreciation of the factors that were at play in the author's life.

Furthermore, through examining George Butler's hitherto ignored sermons, the overlap between his ideas and use of the Bible and those of Josephine at an early stage of their marriage was clearly seen, notably in his speaking out on behalf of the outcast. His sermons were a public challenge to the double standard in Oxford and elsewhere in the 1850s. This raised the question of who influenced whom, to which there is, so far, no definitive answer. But perhaps more importantly, it showed the strength of their shared concerns from the beginning of their marriage and their joint conviction that the Bible was subversive of the double standard; and, furthermore, it showed that it must be publicly proclaimed as such in words as well the actions previously noted by scholars, such as the taking of the released infanticide into their home. Thus, whilst this thesis has argued the importance of taking women's biblical interpretation and public theology more seriously, it has also shown the danger of ignoring the influence upon such women of the men in their lives, and the need for more consideration of the dynamics and symbiotics of their joint enterprise to interpret and apply the Bible.

In terms of Butler's allegiance to the Church or to a denominational affiliation, this thesis has further complicated the notion that she can best be described as an

‘Evangelical Anglican’. Whilst the historian is right to question whether Butler was best placed to define her place in the Christian church, and whether she was being entirely accurate in her statement that ‘I am not of the Church of England’, nevertheless the strength of her statement demands an explanation. This thesis has suggested that she was echoing biblical language in saying that she was in the Church of England but not owned by it or identified with it. On the contrary, Salvation Army sources and Butler’s neglected *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* (1883) have been used to make clear her enthusiasm for, and participation with, the Salvation Army. Crucially, her concern for the outcast was key here, both in terms of her recognition that the SA was reaching the outcast, and in terms of contending for the same principles to be applied to the women of the SA and to the outcast.

Jane Jordan’s wide-ranging biography of Butler pulls together a wealth of material and insights into Butler’s life. However, consideration of Butler’s work alongside the SA in Switzerland and analysis of it in this thesis sheds light, not just on her religious beliefs as some discrete entity, but on her support network, those she was actively campaigning alongside and also on her core principles, which she regarded as being attacked in the person of Katie Booth as well as in the outcast. If consideration of *The Salvation Army in Switzerland* has been neglected because it was regarded as only concerned with Butler’s religious views and not her feminist legacy, this thesis has shown, on the contrary, its importance as one aspect of Butler’s over-arching campaign for the equality of the moral law for all, and a significant example of her battle for women to be allowed to preach and lead.

Furthermore, in terms of new insights into the complicated nature of women’s relationship to the Church, this thesis has demonstrated the conflicting loyalties faced

by a clergy wife and the support and partnership women such as Butler found with other women as they prayed together, evangelised together, and campaigned together, breaking new ground in Christian mission. Thus, a different picture of women's religious allegiances has emerged when compared with traditional histories of discrete denominations.

Butler's decisive influence as the voice of the outcast upon Hugh Price Hughes, Shaftesbury and Spurgeon, in addition to her relationship with the SA suggests that her significance as a force amongst Evangelicals needs to be reconsidered. Nigel Scotland's work, which classified her as an Evangelical Anglican and contained scattered references amounting to about a page, needs reconsideration on two counts: in what sense she can be called an Anglican, and on what grounds compressing her importance and influence relative to other 19th Century evangelicals into one page can be justified.

The importance of Butler's biblical interpretation and public theology contained in *The Lady of Shunem*, 'Mrs Josephine Butler's Bible', her obituary of Catherine Booth and her interview with the SA magazine *All the World*, all published in the 1890s, demands that Mathers' verdict that Butler should not be assessed on the work of her later years alone be re-assessed. From the perspective of women's biblical interpretation and their quest that women be recognised as really skilled biblical interpreters, her later work has been shown to be extraordinarily significant. Her robust rebuttal of the authority of 'inexperienced not gifted clergyboys' shows the mature Butler, free from the constraints of being a clergy wife, demanding official recognition for women in the Church of England and raises the question of how far women gained boldness as they grew older or how far George's death freed Butler to speak her mind about the clergy and the Church of England.

The discovery of the source *Nox Praecessit* (1865) in the Women's Library collection, but not previously recognised as one of her published works or shown in the catalogue as such, raises the possibility that there are other, yet to be discovered, important primary sources, perhaps even in collections of Butler material. This discovery meets the first aim of the quest to recover the voices of female bible interpreters – that of recovery and preservation,¹⁰⁸³ and the analysis in this thesis of the overlooked 'Woman's Place in Church Work' (1892), and 'Mrs. Josephine Butler's Bible' (1894), illustrates that whilst it has been noted how prolific Butler was, and an extensive list of her publications exists, there may well be further undiscovered works of importance, perhaps particularly in regard to her biblical interpretation and Christian faith – the details of which may not have been of so much interest to those concerned solely or primarily with her feminist legacy. The discovery of her decision not to be a part of the team writing *The Woman's Bible* (1895) because she believed that without male Bible interpreters it would be too one-sided, and her outspoken views on the sexism of the men who wished to exclude John 8 from the canon, is of enormous significance to those interested in women Bible interpreters and Butler in particular.

Whilst an assessment of Butler's understanding of typical acts shows the importance of Jesus in her thought, nevertheless this thesis has shown that she does not write off Paul but rather values his epistles, such as those to Timothy, since they argue against immorality and for treating women as sisters and mothers. Thus, Butler's biblical literacy and church setting must be borne in mind when assessing her use of the language of sisterhood and solidarity. The concept of Imperial feminism has rightly

¹⁰⁸³ There is now a digitised copy in Cambridge University Library as well as a paper copy, though both are so far labelled anonymous.

emerged as an important one, and Butler was undoubtedly an imperialist as well as a Christian. However, this thesis has demonstrated that she was not an uninformed imperialist or an uncritical one, and her thinking about current issues in the Empire, whether the Boer War or home rule for Ireland, was primarily shaped by her anti-slavery beliefs. Butler was a woman of her times, and exploration of her use of the term sister and the sincerity and reality or otherwise of it must take into consideration the fact that regarding others as brothers and sisters in Christ was not only a fundamental aspect of Christianity from the Early Church onwards but also was prevalent in the Non-Conformist circles to which Butler was drawn. Similarly, in evaluating whether Butler acted in a patronising manner towards outcast women, or whether by speaking for them she was intrinsically denying them agency, this thesis has argued the significance of Butler's enthusiastic endorsement of the training and equipping of former outcasts and brothel owners, such as Rebecca Jarrett, for service in society and the Christian Church. This must be ranked alongside Butler's persuasion of Cambridge University to test and attest the education of women. Butler's breadth of vision was notable amongst her contemporaries as she sought to increase the educational and employment opportunities of all manner of women.

Echoes of biblical language in Butler's use of expressions, such as 'devoted to destruction', 'lost coin' and 'outcast', have demonstrated another layer of the way the Bible influenced her thought and the articulation of it. In examining Butler's three expositions of the Levite's Concubine narrative, in which a woman is literally cast out, this thesis has argued that Butler's 'imaginative identification' with the outcast, which Benckhuysen proposed was at play in the Hagar exposition, was also at play when she addressed the Levite's concubine story. A suggestive case was made for the influence of

contemporary paintings in the form of Hunt's 'The Light of the World' as part of her interpretation. Therefore, this thesis has argued that Butler's interpretation was a significant contribution to the reception history or afterlife of the Levite's Concubine.

Similarly, in Butler's 'Voice in the Wilderness' speeches and publication, her identification with John the Baptist has been highlighted. But attention has also been drawn to the fact that she puts in quotation marks that she is crying in 'this vast wilderness of men' and that this has resonances with literary antecedents who critiqued culture from the perspective of gender relations.

Josephine Butler's lifetime covered an extraordinary period of change in the lives of women – she was on the committees that argued for that change and she was in the vanguard of it. However, she belonged to no committee, no organised body, for women bible interpreters, though her contribution to Cady Stanton's, *The Woman's Bible*, would have been interesting. At the time that Cady Stanton was compiling that groundbreaking book of women's biblical interpretation, Butler was prophesying and doing her biblical interpretation on the public stage through her speeches, writings, correspondence, conversations and praxis, as she campaigned against the sexual double standard.

Butler's contemporary, the scholar Francis William Newman, who supported her campaign, said of her that 'she reads scripture like a child and interprets it like an angel'.¹⁰⁸⁴ Precisely what he meant by that, other than being complimentary, it is not possible to say, but neither he nor Butler saw her role as being that of 'the angel in the

¹⁰⁸⁴ Quoted in Letter of Miss Elizabeth Pearson to the Office of *The Storm-Bell*, 20 Dec 1898. Newman wrote to Miss Pearson's mother after *Sursum Corda* was published (1871) and said: 'It is only on historical points I differ from Mrs Butler. I agree with what she says'. He then made this remark.

house' of Coventry Patmore's poem. Near to the beginning of her campaign, Josephine surely alluded dismissively to 'The Angel in the House' in her address to the LNA as she characterised men as saying,

'You must make us good and keep us good, you... must forgive our impurities and wash them away by your own secret tears... and for your reward you shall be called angels, in many a pretty poem and essay.'¹⁰⁸⁵

Years later Butler was to write that 'angels need to keep and use their wings outside the home.'¹⁰⁸⁶ In her role as the voice of the outcast, Butler used those wings as she firmly located herself outside the home, indeed outside the camp.

In her exegesis of the Hagar narrative Butler's contemporary Mary Elizabeth Beck (fl. 1872 -1908), an English Quaker, expressed sympathy for Hagar, but used Hagar's narrative to urge her readers to 'Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'¹⁰⁸⁷ Commenting on this Taylor and Weir say,

'Beck recognized the problems encountered by nineteenth- century women [and] offered spiritual solace for these difficulties; other women like Grimke, Weld... and Stanton worked against the systemic flaws in society in order to end women's oppression.'¹⁰⁸⁸

Butler, as has been demonstrated, did both.

In examining Butler's relationship to biblical interpretation over the course of time it would seem that her priorities shifted. Her initial focus, as she sought to gain equality for women, was increased education and employment opportunities. Then her focus shifted to the priority of combatting the sexual double standard, since she believed it was the poison in the roots of society. Finally, she saw a new priority – that of having really well-trained, skilled women bible interpreters to work alongside men, and thus advised Kate Bushnell to concentrate on becoming skilled in that area rather than

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Sursum Corda* (1871) in Jordan & Sharp, vol. 2, pp.168-205, p.189

¹⁰⁸⁶ 'Home', *The Storm-Bell*, No.20, February (1900), pp.266-271, p.271

¹⁰⁸⁷ Mary Elizabeth Beck, 'Bible Readings on Bible Women' [1892] in Taylor & Weir, (2006) pp.221-223

¹⁰⁸⁸ Beck, in Taylor & Weir (2006) pp.221-223. p. 222

campaigning further against the double standard.¹⁰⁸⁹ In other words, she first of all saw women's equality being held back by lack of access to education and employment, then held back by the underlying double standard, and finally held back by the biblical interpretation which people used to ignore or acquiesce with the double standard and a lack of equality.

Moberly Bell, who lamented the fact that Butler did not continue to prioritise working for change in education, suggested that reform might have happened so much more quickly if she had. One can also wonder what the effect would have been if she had earlier prioritised women becoming skilled Bible interpreters, since, perhaps, it would not have taken until 1945 for women to be allowed to study theology at Oxford.

In the last article he wrote, Hugh Price Hughes criticised theologians who were 'armchair authorities', saying,

'All the greatest teachers in all ages of the Christian religion from the days of St. Paul until now have been evangelists as well as theologians. Theology has been constantly governed by experience and experience has been enlightened by theology.'¹⁰⁹⁰

By combining her biblical interpretation with the practise of public theology Butler avoided the pitfall of armchair theologising. In this respect surely Butler's biblical interpretation will be studied and debated long after Jowett's is forgotten?

¹⁰⁸⁹ See Katharine Bushnell's autobiography for an example of a woman who at Butler's suggestion gave up campaigning against prostitution and engaged in seven years study of the Bible becoming an influential biblical teacher. Both women saw this as vital to ending the 'subjection' of women in the churches and ending the sexual double standard. Dr. Katharine Bushnell, *A Brief Sketch of Her Life Work* (Hertford, 1932)

¹⁰⁹⁰ Review of 'The Death of Christ' by Prof James Denney, *Methodist Times* (Nov 20th, 1902)

Elsa Tamez said that for too long theology was the preserve of western men of the north. Butler knew many of them and would have agreed. Clearly, the concerns of some contemporary male theologians have broadened. The Oxford theologian, Christine Joynes, writes that in his

‘1993 inaugural lecture as Dean Ireland ‘s Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture at the University of Oxford, Christopher Rowland made an impassioned plea for a commitment to the poor and marginalised by biblical exegetes. He emphasized that this was a fundamental feature of the biblical text, and cautioned, “The balance of factors which exclude or render some voiceless in the interpretative process demands constant vigilance.”’¹⁰⁹¹

Butler would have agreed with Rowland, and her voice, too, showed ‘the imaginative possibilities of radical engagement with the Bible in inclusive social contexts.’¹⁰⁹²

Before 20th Century feminist theology and 20th Century womanist theology, with their different emphases, Butler was leading the way in reading the Bible from the point of view of women – all women, including outcast women, black and white, as a resistant reader. She articulated her resultant biblical interpretation on the public stage as a public theology on behalf of the outcast- determined not only to ‘walk hand in hand and side by side with the outcast’ but also to be her voice.

¹⁰⁹¹ Christine E. Joynes, ‘Still at the Margins? Gospel Women and their Afterlives’, in Bennett, Z. & Gowler, David B. (eds.), *Radical Christian Voices and Practice: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland* (Oxford, 2012) pp.117-136, p.133

¹⁰⁹² Back cover Bennett and Gowler (2012)

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