

THE BISHOP AND THE EDITOR

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Until 1856 the principal local papers in Buckinghamshire were 'county journals', published in Aylesbury, circulating throughout the county, sometimes with a smaller Metropolitan circulation, and carrying sale notices and advertisements intended for the wealthier inhabitants of Bucks and the adjoining counties. They competed for readers and divided ideologically along political, and religious lines, taking a Tory, Whig, or Radical line in politics, and expressing support or disapproval for the Established Church and agricultural protectionism.

The 'Bucks Free Press', changed this pattern. It was first published on December 19th 1856, by William Butler, a Congregationalist printer and chemist. It was printed in High Wycombe, and editorials by Butler show the BFP was intended to be a departure from the earlier pattern. Butler's paper was meant to circulate, amongst all classes, in the area around High Wycombe and along the recently-built Wycombe railway line and the Great Western Railway. On 26-12-56 Butler wrote:

In adapting the form and size of our journal, we have been guided by two considerations . . . (the second being that it should sell) . . . at a cost within the means of every labouring man.

Though Butler disclaimed support for any political party, his editorials show he was of a crusading disposition, and a moderate Radical, usually ironically humorous about Disraeli and Conservatism. His Nonconformist religious commitment was more important to him than his political beliefs however. Editorials on religious topics often outnumber those on politics, and editorials condemning the Papacy or 'ultra-ritualism' always precede editorials on political topics like Reform, and are usually longer. In his first editorial Butler stated the paper's position with

regard to religion before mentioning politics:

We hold *religiously*, to an open bible the birthright of every Briton – *politically*, to the necessity of constant progress . . .

On 14-5-59 when he expanded the paper he said:

The "South Bucks Free Press" claims the patronage and sympathy of every Minister of religion, as a Journal that without being technically a religious journal, will ever advocate those great moral and religious movements of the age, which are so distinctive of our beloved country.

At the beginning of 1859 Butler tacitly colluded in what might be called either a crusade or a 'dirty tricks' campaign against Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford, intended to make Wilberforce admit he was a secret Catholic sympathiser.

Butler's suspicion of Wilberforce, though unfounded, was not entirely unreasonable. Wilberforce had lost friends and gained a reputation for insincerity in 1848, during the controversy over Lord John Russell's much-contested appointment of Professor Hampden as Bishop of Hereford. Wilberforce had been unjustly suspected of first condemning Hampden's writings without reading them, and then supporting Hampden and his writings because of behind-the-scenes pressure from members of the Royal family. More recently, the 'Quarterly' in 1858, had criticised Cuddesdon College, the seminary founded by Wilberforce, for teaching a cloistered and unreal view of modern clerical life. This was associated with the temporary management of Cuddesdon by H. P. Liddon in 1856-7, when the Principal had been ill. Wilberforce had started an enquiry into the running of the College and in January 1859 Liddon had resigned. Nonetheless there was a



Plate 1. William Butler

(Courtesy Bucks Free Press)



Plate 2. Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.

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public perception of Cuddesdon as a centre for the teaching of 'ultra-ritualism' to young clergymen. On top of this, three of Wilberforce's brothers, his daughter and four of his in-law relations converted to Roman Catholicism between 1850 and 1868. His brother Robert had died in 1857 at Rome on the point of becoming a Catholic Priest.

Butler's campaign was first sparked off by the proposed restoration of Wycombe parish church in 1859. Butler was hostile to church restoration and the innovations of ritual associated with the Oxford Movement and later with 'High Church' Anglicanism. His hostility, widespread among Nonconformists at the time, was based on the suspicion (bizarre to the modern mind) that innovations in ritual and architecture in the Anglican Church were a cover for the 'perversion' of the Church of England back to Catholicism. At the time, being Protestant was considered virtually part of being English. Catholicism on the other hand had only been given equal treatment with Protestantism for thirty years and was associated with the Pope's suppression of Garibaldi's Italian Nationalists, and with the perceived threat to England – mentioned by various commentators at the time – from destitute and doubtfully-loyal Irish immigrants fleeing famine and rebellion in their own country.

In the 28–1–59 BFP, Butler published a letter from Thomas Wheeler, the Wycombe banker and brewer. Wheeler left the Anglican Church because of what he called his 'decided attachment to Evangelical views' and even while an Anglican, he had been one of the first graduates of the non-sectarian London University. A report in the BFP of March 18th 1859 describes Wheeler chairing an evening lecture on 'Puseyism: . . . this sadly prevalent superstition in the English Church' at which the Tractarian movement was denounced as: 'an organized system, whose object was to establish church power over the ruins of civil and ecclesiastical liberty'. Wheeler was a contemporary and friend of Butler's who shared his religious and political beliefs and it is difficult to believe his letter arrived on Butler's desk entirely out of the blue. Wheeler described how he had been to Sunday Service at the newly restored Parish Church at Aylesbury:

. . . I was forcibly struck with its great formality, so foreign to my ideas of the simplicity of Protestant worship.

His letter then described a very 'High' Anglican service and concluded:

were I a resident in Aylesbury, I should seek some other house of God. . . . My decision is formed, not . . . to . . . assist in any such plan of restoration as that of Aylesbury . . . (and) in these times of lamentable perversion avoid by all means expending large sums, which may one day serve to Romanize our Protestant Church'.

Butler must have been making capital out of unease which he knew already existed in Oxford diocese. The following day's 'Bucks Herald' contained a letter from the Rev. William Fremantle, incumbent of the Claydons and a Rural Dean, describing the re-consecration of the newly-restored church at Addington near Buckingham. The restoration had been almost a re-building, with only the original tower left. Fremantle, who had assisted in the re-consecration, was writing the letter as several people had written to him questioning the Protestant nature of some of its features and asking him, as a conservative clergyman, for an accurate account of the ceremony. Although he does not say so, he was writing to the 'Bucks Herald' as this was the paper patronised by the Anglican Church in Bucks – it alone carried a regular 'Ecclesiastical Intelligence' column and told advertisers it was particularly aimed at the 'Clergy, Gentry and Agriculturalists'. Fremantle's correspondents had been particularly worried that the ceremony had apparently included a procession, with a processional cross, and they were uneasy as well about a cross set in the wall of the church above the communion table, (a cross was illegal on the table itself), the placing of an embroidered cover over the communion vessels and the bringing of water to add to the Communion wine. Fremantle said that Wilberforce had told Mr. Perry, the curate who had produced the embroidered covers, to remove them and when Perry had afterwards produced the water 'the Bishop . . . peremptorily bade him take it away'. In his sermon later, Wilberforce had defended the cross above the altar as a Protestant feature saying:

' . . . it was a symbol of the primitive Church, but the Roman Catholics had abused the primitive symbol by adding the figure of a man . . . converting it into a crucifix.'

Fremantle (who had been the only clergyman there wearing the traditional clerical bands), admitted he had felt uneasy as well about the ceremony:

but in the presence of the Bishop, the Archdeacon, and the Rector of the parish I felt that the responsibility for questioning the proceedings did not rest with me.

However his letter concluded:

I have a very strong opinion . . . that the symbol is apt to take the place of the thing signified, and that as symbols have been fatally perverted at Rome, so they may fall to similar perversions in England. (BH 29–1–59).

The following week Butler's editorial in the BFP said:

Last week we inserted a letter . . . which . . . rejoiced the hearts of all sound Protestants to whatever section of the church they belong. . . . in these times of false doctrine and popish practice it is most natural that . . . all contemplated alterations should be rigidly discussed. . . . we must not trust to mere assertions and statements: the tactics of the party from whom error is to be anticipated are too wily to command our confidence; they have a fearful facility of 'becoming all things to all men' . . . The truth of this has just received a most forcible illustration from an incident occurring in this diocese; . . . A church it seems has just been built or *restored* at Addington, (BFP 4–2–59)

Butler's political and religious dislikes were combined in the restoration of Addington Church. It was by G. E. Street, the architect of Cuddesdon College, and had been paid for by Wilberforce's old friend John Gellibrand Hubbard of Addington Manor, who was elected Conservative M.P. for Buckingham that year. The 'Bucks Herald' had described the re-consecration ceremony in full in its 15–1–59 edition and the following week had complimented Hubbard for his generosity: 'we take the opportunity of calling special attention to this good and great work' (BH 22–1–59) adding that Wilberforce's speech: 'might well be quoted in furtherance of our conviction that Romish predominance and national purity, . . . are the antithesis of each other'.

Most of Butler's readers would not have read the 'Bucks Herald', which was avowedly exclusive, religiously and socially, and they would have no first-hand knowledge of the ceremony at Addington or the letter by Fremantle, so Butler's editorial on 4–2–59 repeated Wilberforce's words about the 'Protestant' cross on the east wall of the church:

. . . the Roman Catholic . . . puts the figure of a man upon it, so making a crucifix . . . The Church of England says, 'No; this cross we honour as the first Christians honoured it; but as to your crucifix, we will have nothing

to do with it, any more than the Apostles' . . . so the Church of England standing upon the unassailable ground of the first primitive truth, can upset popish error as no other church can.

Butler dismissed this as 'a precious piece of Jesuitry' and, addressing 'liberal Dissenters who would gladly aid their fellow Christians in any good work', asked:

Is this the sort of church restoration you would like to promote at Wycombe? . . . Will you welcome to its altars the men who thus so fearfully pervert God's Holy Word? . . . We trow not . . . That an English Bishop should dare, . . . so to pervert Scripture . . . is surely a most appalling proof of the progress which the spirit of Romanism has already made in the professedly Reformed Church of England. If this bold and wily traitor to Protestantism is not unfrocked, but suffered to remain, corrupting his own communion and comforting and abetting Puseyites and Romanisers, it will not be his fault if the distinction between the Roman and Anglican Churches is not reduced to that which exists between a cross and a crucifix.

The following day the 'Bucks Herald' contained a letter from Authur Isham, Rector of Weston Turville, and like Fremantle a Rural Dean. Isham could not understand why Wilberforce had not forbidden the use of the processional cross at Addington, especially as he had expressed disapproval of them the previous April at a meeting of Rural Deans, and had forbidden Mr. Perry's communion water and embroidered covers: 'I hope to hear a similar condemnation of the "processional cross" used at Addington from his Lordship.' (BH 5–2–59). The next week, events took a more unpleasant tone – Butler told his readers in an editorial that he had received 'a publication called "The First Catechism of Christian Doctrine"' and with it an unsigned note saying:

. . . We beg to introduce to your favourable notice the enclosed "Catechism of Christian Doctrine" for the promotion of Church authority and Spiritual life, patronized by your excellent Bishop, and many high in the Church. (BFP 11–2–59).

Butler continued:

With this introduction we were prepared to read such an exposition of Church principles as our high church friends are wont to give in these times, – Romish error gilded with evangelical unction and grace.

He carried on:

Our astonishment may be conceived when instead, we found a plain unblushing unfolding of the worst errors of

Rome. Let us justify our statement by a few extracts . . .

Butler went on to quote questions and answers from the book too long to be reproduced here, but which were distinctly Roman Catholic – they said, among other things, that the Bishop of Rome: ‘The Patriarch of the West’, was ‘first in honour’ among the Bishops of the Church, that the Church could speak infallibly, that the dead can be helped by prayer, that sin can be divided into venial and mortal sin, and that Christians should confess their sins to priests.

Butler continued:

Here then we have all the distinctive doctrines of the Church of Rome . . . readers will say, ‘You are hoaxing us’ . . . We earnestly wish for the sake of the Church of England such were the case but it is from a foe within the camp . . . that the thing has come.

The real thrust of the editorial was in the last paragraph – Wilberforce had been completely silent and Butler concluded by saying:

But as to the alleged agreement with the views of ‘our excellent Bishop’, we must leave our readers to judge, by a comparison with his public character, if the allegation be not true, it ought to be at once, publicly denied and discountenanced.

Butler was obviously trying to force Wilberforce to admit that he was what might be called a ‘closet Catholic’. If Wilberforce reluctantly admitted he agreed with Catholic doctrine, opposed to that of the Anglican Church, he would finally have been uncovered by the Protestant enthusiasts who had mistrusted him for so long, and if he denied it and later converted to Catholicism like so many of his relations, he and High Church innovations in the diocese of Oxford would be discredited. The obvious solution for Wilberforce, if he were acting in good faith, would be to follow Butler’s advice and issue a public denial.

Wilberforce could have made such a denial with complete sincerity – his distaste for the Roman Catholic Church had become intense since the death of his brother Robert, however; apart from occasionally denying statements which were obviously libellous, he refused to participate in newspaper controversies. A practical reason for this must have been that such controversies often simmered inconclusively for months, degenerating into undignified attacks on the good faith of the participants, but he explains why, more than once, in his letters. After press attacks over the Hampden case he had written

an undated letter to ‘a dear friend’ (surely a diary entry expressing feelings he could not make public) explaining his behaviour.

If the question before me were ‘Shall I answer the attacks of Newspapers’ I should not hesitate for one moment as to my course. The best answer to such charges is Silence & a life.

Another characteristic statement is in a letter of February 1848 to a critical Churchman: ‘. . . I therefore follow the Scriptural rule of privately telling you wherein I think you have been in the wrong’.

By now voices sympathetic to Wilberforce were beginning to be heard: A letter signed ‘WHY?’ appeared in the next edition of the ‘Bucks Herald’ saying Freemantle should have expressed his unease to his ecclesiastical superiors when they were present at Addington, rather than in a newspaper letter to which the Bishop could not reply. (BH 12–2–59)

The following week’s BFP (18–2–59) referred back to the ‘Romish’ publication and continued:

We have just been permitted to read a correspondence on the subject with the Bishop, and feel it to be but justice to his Lordship to publish the following extract from his letter: – “I have today received the catechism, of which I highly disapprove”.

Butler was not retracting what he said though:

. . . we doubted not that the Bishop . . . must, if appealed to, deny any complicity with such unmitigated Romish teaching; yet, as we there said we say again, the Bishop must be judged by his public conduct.

Butler then described a pamphlet circulating in the diocese: ‘Facts and Documents, shewing the Alarming state of the diocese of Oxford, by a Senior Clergyman . . .’:

As . . . sincere friends of a protestant and evangelic faith, we feel it a bounden duty, to call the attention of our readers to this work. . . they will find evidence of the “introduction, actual or attempted, to the diocese of Oxford, of Auricular Confession; Altar Crosses and Crucifixes; . . . the Romish Wafer; mixing water with wine at the Eucharist; . . . the Priest crossing himself; Prayer and Masses for the dead . . . and on the position of the Bishop of the diocese”.

Butler made clear how much faith he placed in Wilberforce’s denial by continuing:

Having carefully read these ‘Facts and Documents’ our readers will be able to form some idea of the real opinions of the Bishop of their diocese . . . they will see

that it fully justifies the motto on the title page that, 'The character of our Church is undergoing a gradual and silent change, and not for the better, but is steadily verging towards Rome.

The following week (BFP 25–2–59) Butler returned to the subject of the ceremony at Addington, quoting a letter in the *The Christian World*. The letter, signed 'A CLERGYMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL', described the unsuccessful attempts of Mr. Perry, the Curate, to produce the Communion Vessels under embroidered covers and the bottle of water to mix with communion wine. The letter writer continued ironically:

Now, do you know that there are people wicked enough to believe that this little contest between Mr. Perry and the Bishop about the embroidered coverings and the water bottle, was . . . agreed upon between them before the ceremony began, in order to prove to the simple natives of the neighbourhood, *what a staunch Protestant they had after all for their Bishop?* And truly . . . if Mr. Perry had not been very well acquainted with the *real sentiments* of the Bishop, if he had expected *any other than a simulated* reproof would he have *dared to produce a bottle of water at all?* . . . Surely if the indignation of the bishop had been *real* if it had *not* been *simulated* . . . we should, by this time, have heard of the suspension of Mr. Perry. . . .

Wilberforce stayed silent, and the controversy died down until March 3rd. That day's BFP published a letter, written over a week earlier, by the Rev. F. B. Ashley, Vicar of Wooburn, then a large semi-industrial parish near High Wycombe. (Ashley's letter was signed 'A Clergyman' but it is possible to identify him as the author from his anonymously-published autobiography in High Wycombe Reference Library). Ashley was an unusual clergyman—he had not been to Oxford or Cambridge and had become a priest after a career as an infantry officer in India. In his autobiography he unconsciously describes a lifetime of compulsive overwork, interrupted by exhausted 'collapses', 'failures', or 'giving way of health' which would be loosely referred to as nervous breakdowns today. This inability to ration his efforts was probably the reason Wilberforce had sent him in 1848 to Wooburn, at that time a depressed area following the temporary collapse of the paper industry, and a hotbed of Mormonism.

The bogus Catechism had been sent to candidates for the next confirmation at Wooburn, which Wilberforce was due to conduct in mid-April. Although Wilberforce wouldn't respond to public

taunts he was willing privately to resolve the doubts of sincere enquirers – Ashley had written to Wilberforce about the Catechism and Wilberforce had replied by return of post, saying 'he is utterly opposed to the vile Catechism'. Ashley had also asked Wilberforce about the anonymous 'Facts and Documents' pamphlet and Wilberforce had denied one of the most damaging charges in it: 'that the Bishop patronizes a Book Published by a Mr. Purchas, and attempts to introduce the Romish customs therein taught'. Wilberforce also comprehensively denied supporting the introduction of 'Romish' customs, and declared that if he had seen some of the other ornaments at Addington Church in time, he would have swept them away too, before concluding:

This absurd ultra ritualism has never had any favour from me but I won't persecute good men on that side more than on the other.

Ashley had then asked Wilberforce for his permission to quote from the letter and Wilberforce had granted it – hence Ashley's letter to the BFP. Butler made no comment, however once again he was unrepentant. In the 25–3–59 BFP he referred to a petition circulated among the Archdeacons and Rural Deans of the diocese expressing confidence in Wilberforce's good faith. Arthur Isham however had refused to sign it and had explained why in a pamphlet. Butler reproduced what he called the 'gist of the matter' of Isham's pamphlet. Isham had said about Wilberforce's speech at Addington:

(These) are most satisfactory words but his *acts* perplex me. My conviction is that if the Church of England ever should be Romanized, it will be accomplished in the way the Bishop adopts, introducing . . . pomp and ceremony . . . Get hold of the senses of the people and you will get hold of their sentiments too.

Butler recalled Ashley's letter three weeks earlier and recommended the 'honest words' of Isham to Ashley before continuing:

Men occupying high positions in the diocese are among those wanting confidence in the Bishop. . . . the plea for peace is out of place here . . . only the cause of error can be secured by soft words.

Ashley was unwilling to let this go unanswered and wrote a further reply in the BFP on April 1st 1859 which denied that the 'gist' of Isham's pamphlet answered any of the points he had made:

I wrote respecting three distinct charges made against

the Bishop of Oxford . . . circulated by your paper in this parish. . . . They are either true or false. Mr. Isham must have considered them *untrue* or he would have stated them in his pamphlet.

This is not a bad point to make: Butler *was* being disingenuous, after virtually accusing the Bishop of elaborately acting a part, to quote Isham's far less personal and specific uneasiness against ritual and pomp. The rest of the letter is less immediately cogent. It was written within a few months of the death of Ashley's son and Ashley had prolonged sabbatical leave around this time – he may have been starting to experience another of the shadowy 'collapses' or 'failures of health'. Broadly speaking his letter can be said to attack the fundamental unsoundness of fighting for Christian Protestant Truth with untruthful attacks on the Bishop: 'untenable statements . . . I believe to be deadly injury to our cause – Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life"'. Butler printed the letter commenting acidly that he would leave it:

to the candid judgement of all who may have read anything that we have written on this subject, confident that, from a comparison of the two, . . . we shall loose nothing.

Neither side had really won and the controversy like so many others, might have continued indefinitely. By this time it had generated other pamphlets, and was becoming noticed in the national press – the 'Times' on March 10th had published a letter condemning the Archdeacons and Rural Deans who had signed the petition of support for Wilberforce and praising those like Isham who had abstained. It had also published a private 'remonstrance' by 100 Clergymen sent to Wilberforce stating their unease at 'Romanising' tendencies in the Diocese. The 'Bucks Herald' which apart from printing letters by Fremantle and Isham, had ignored the controversy, published two letters on the subject on April 16th as well. One letter (by 'Eirenophilus' – 'Lover of Peace') urged silence saying the campaign against Wilberforce served 'Rome, dissent, and the Devil'. Wilberforce though had become convinced at last, of the need for action on his part, and *Eirenophilus's* letter was followed by a series of letters intended for publication. The first one, written by John Davenport, Wilberforce's secretary, on March 19th, explained how Wilberforce had read Isham's letters to the press and had authorised Davenport to demand from Isham:

. . . a simple, uncompromising, and complete retraction of the offensive insinuations contained in them, (not a mere explanation or apology), to be as publicly made as the offence. Failing which I am to inform you . . . the Bishop . . . requests you to return to me (at Oxford) your Commission as a Rural Dean.

Isham waited until April 1st, a Friday, before replying and Wilberforce seems to have carried out his threat to withdraw Isham's commission. Isham had finally written to Davenport making the 'retractation' Wilberforce had demanded:

I distinctly declare that I never intended to charge his Lordship with falsehood . . . but simply to express my own view of the tendency of his Lordship having allowed these ceremonials. (BH 16–4–59).

The affair ended happily for Isham. The following Monday Davenport had written a reply explaining that Isham's letter was:

. . . satisfactory to the Bishop of Oxford. The several letters of the 21st, 25th and 26th have been cancelled and your commission is herewith returned.

On May 5th the 'Times' carried a report of Wilberforce's reply to the 'remonstrance'. The Bishop explained how extensive interviews with the laity in Oxford diocese had convinced him that the discontent was 'confined to a small minority'. An 'address of affection and confidence' which he had been sent by his clergy had been signed by almost five-sixths of the clergy, and supported by others who had not signed. The 'procession' at Addington had simply been an orderly walk by the assembled clergy around the ground which was to be added to the Churchyard, as appointed in the Consecration Service, and the carrying of a processional cross by Mr. Perry a temporary curate, unfamiliar with local practice, had been done without the Bishop's knowledge. Mr. Perry had been asked to desist and has done so – 'Surely such acts as these must be greatly magnified to give them the undue importance they have assumed in some eyes.'

On a more general note the Bishop continued: 'I entirely disapprove of all needless and unsettling changes in our churches', however:

Looking at the neglected condition of too many churches, with their green walls, . . . and mouldy furniture, which none of you will admit into your own dwellings, but which so many seem to think unobjectionable in the House of God, I should be very unwilling to check the zeal of church restorers.

He maintained a balanced view:

while we suffer much from the attempts made by a few, mostly inexperienced young men, to introduce among us unusual ornaments or ritual observances . . . we suffer quite as much from a suspicious querulous temper, leading others to whisper insinuations.

Finally he made a characteristically generous assurance to all those who had spoken or written against him:

I give you credit for having signed whatever you have signed with pure intentions; and only pray you, that if at any time . . . my conduct of the diocese causes you scruple or alarm, that you will tell me privately of your difficulty, instead of flying to inflammatory public appeals.

This marked the end of the campaign against Wilberforce and church restoration, though it was by no means the last occasion on which 'Popery' and 'Ultra-ritualism' were the subject of letters and editorials in the BFP. As late as November 1866 Butler was recommending readers to sign a petition to Wilberforce protesting about 'Popish Ritualism' and in 1867 there was a 'cod' letter signed 'A Protestant' complaining that workmen repairing the dilapidated church at Wycombe were introducing 'Romish vestments, intoning and incense' by wearing their caps in the church, whistling and smoking. Church restoration was still such a sensitive subject that it was ten years before work started on restoring Wycombe Church – the subsequent restoration, though it removed a lot of the existing interior was not excessively gothic and has been called a 'minimalist restoration'.

The heat of these disputes has long since gone.

Wilberforce's words about crediting his attackers with pure intentions seem borne out by a private letter from him to Arthur Isham, written on New Year's Day 1863, – it ends: 'Heartily wishing you & Mrs. Isham & your daughter all blessings in this New Year'. Ashley, the former East India Company officer who supported missionaries to foreign countries, would surely never have predicted that there would be a Mosque and a Catholic Church in Wycombe today, as well as an Ecumenical Shared Church in the Diocese of Oxford (at Burnham). Part of the reason for the rise of religious toleration has been the chill wind of religious scepticism which was given a vital underpinning from science in 1859 by the publication of *On The Origin of Species*. This book has been more damaging to Wilberforce's reputation than any of Butler's pamphlets, as Wilberforce is often remembered today, quite unjustly, for his unsuccessful, but scientifically sound attempt, in 1860, to disprove the theory of Evolution in debate with T. H. Huxley. (Ironically Butler wrote an editorial: 'The Science of Geology' in March 1863 which 'disproved' the theory of Evolution).

In 1983 the 'Bucks Free Press' marked sympathetically the 150th anniversary of the Oxford Movement – the first cause of church restoration in the 19th century – and William Butler's final comments about Wilberforce in 1873 suggest he was generous enough to admit he had been unjust to the Bishop 14 years earlier. Wilberforce (a lifelong lover of horses) had been killed in a fall while riding, and Butler began: 'England has suddenly been deprived of one of the ablest and most remarkable members of the episcopal bench'.

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