ART. V.—BUTLER'S "ANALOGY."

THERE is hardly any book in the English language which, if thoughtfully studied, would be so wholesome and remedial of the ills of the present generation in respect to belief as Bishop Butler's "Analogy." That is the name by which the Bishop's great work generally goes, but it is only an abbreviation of the title given to it by its author, which indicates its purpose much more clearly, "The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature," and by "the Constitution and Course of Nature" the Bishop means that which we experience in daily life under the providential government of God. Therefore the treatise is addressed, not to atheists, but to deists, and its typical argument is this: You say that you will not accept the religious system proposed to you because it contains something which, being unreasonable or unjust, could not have come from God; but, if you look closely, you will find that same thing in the ordinary course of the world's government, which you allow comes from God, and therefore you are illogical in rejecting in religion as unreasonable, unjust, and unbecoming to God, that which you accept as coming from His hand in daily life. For example, you will have nothing to do with Christianity because it teaches the value of vicarious suffering, but look at our daily life: do not you see instances on instances of the value to one man of the sufferings undergone in his behalf by another? Be consistent; either say with the Epicurean that there is no God who providentially governs the world, which goes on by haphazard or by mechanical laws, or do not object to Christianity because it has a characteristic which it shares with the course of Nature, directed, as you acknowledge, by God.

There are two classes of objections brought against religion: one, *a posteriori*—this *did* not happen, and I *do* not believe it; the other, *a priori*—this *could* not happen, and I *cannot* believe it. The best argument that we have to meet the *a posteriori* difficulties is that of Archdeacon Paley in his "Evidences of Christianity." The best argument against the *a priori* difficulties is to be found in the present treatise of Bishop Butler.

The treatise consists of two parts, the first dealing with natural religion, the second with revealed religion. At the beginning stands a preliminary chapter, the purpose of which is to prove the likelihood of a future life, in which the Bishop argues that neither the reason of the thing nor the analogy of Nature should lead us to believe that we ourselves perish

with the dissolution of the bodies with which we are connected. In this chapter there are passages here and there which have to be corrected, owing to the extension of our knowledge of natural science since the days of the author; but whether this be done or no, the argument as a whole stands firm, and leaves us, not with the certainty, but yet with the probability, of our future existence. The credibility of a future life is a foundation-stone both of natural and revealed religion.

Natural and revealed religion differ in this: Natural religion is that which we can attain to by the exercise of our reason, intuition, and our other faculties, and consists of religious regards to God the Father. Revealed religion is a republication of natural religion, and in addition it teaches us our relation to God the Son and God the Holy Ghost (of which natural religion knows nothing certain), and it gives an account of a dispensation of things, not discoverable by reason, in consequence of which several distinct precepts are enjoined us.

The objection first proposed is that both natural and revealed religion represent God as dealing out punishment to men for the transgression of His precepts, a thing supposed to be unworthy of the greatness of God, considering the weakness and littleness of man. The answer from analogy is: God deals with us in a similar manner in daily life. Walk along a path bordering a precipice, transgress the law of gravitation by stepping off the path, and you are punished for your transgression by death. Why take that as a fatal objection in religion which you experience in every-day life without shrinking?

But, continues the opponent, you require that God should dispense His rewards and punishments according as men are righteous or wicked, and their action good or evil. You do not find that He does that in daily life. Do you not? answers the disciple of Butler. Do you not find that virtue is rewarded both by the temper of mind that it begets in the virtuous man—calmness, serenity, peacefulness, and by the affection and respect that it generates in others? And is not vice punished by pains of body and remorse of mind, and by the consciousness of the disapprobation of those most worthy of respect? God is not only the Governor, but the moral Governor, of the world, and though, for reasons partially hidden from us, there are hindrances which prevent virtue being always rewarded and vice punished, yet no one can doubt that the *tendency* of virtue is to produce happiness, and of vice to bring about unhappiness, and "these things are to be considered as a declaration of the Author of Nature for virtue,

and against vice; they give a credibility to the supposition of their being rewarded and punished hereafter, and also ground to hope and to fear that they may be rewarded and punished in higher degrees than they are here" (chap. iii.).

Another point in both natural and revealed religion which the sceptic refuses to believe is that in this life we are in a state of probation for another, that our future estate will depend on our conduct here, and that we are intended to discipline ourselves so as to be more fitted for a higher life hereafter. The answer, as supplied by analogy, is that we find some parts of our present life to be times of preparation for other parts; *e.g.*, our childhood and youth serve as a preparation for the higher estate to which we arrive on maturity, and the happiness or misery of our later life is made to depend on the way in which we have used our earlier years: if we have used the events which have happened to us in a way to improve our characters, we find serenity and peace in our later years; if we have given way to the temptations which have assailed us, we bring upon ourselves misery arising both from our internal tempers and from our external relations.

"The former part of life, then, is to be considered as an important opportunity which Nature puts into our hands, and which, when lost, is not to be recovered. And our being placed in a state of discipline throughout this life for another world is a Providential disposition of things, exactly of the same kind as our being placed in a state of discipline during childhood for mature age. Our condition in both respects is uniform and of a piece, and comprehended under one and the same general law of Nature" (chap. v.).

"And the alternative is left to our choice, either to improve ourselves and better our condition, or, in default of such improvement, to remain deficient and wretched. It is, therefore, perfectly credible, from the analogy of Nature, that the same may be our case with respect to the happiness of a future state, and the qualifications necessary for it" (*ibid.*).

The opponent may now be supposed to burst in with a very far-reaching objection. There can be no rewards and punishments of men hereafter for their actions here, because all their doings and failures are the result of the law of necessity. They could not have done otherwise, and therefore there was no merit or demerit in what they did or did not, and consequently no man deserves to be either rewarded or punished. For himself, Butler repudiates the doctrine of necessity (Part II., chap. viii.). But he is not satisfied with that. He proceeds to argue that, if it is reconcilable with the constitution of Nature (which is the position of his adversary), it is equally reconcilable with religion. Whatever theoretical

perplexities may surround the question, the law of necessity, if it exists, must hold throughout. Now, in daily life we know that we are treated *as though* we were free; we can lift up our hand and drop it; we can bring suffering upon ourselves by some acts, and enjoyment by others. Why should not the same principle hold good in the religious sphere as that which we experience day by day?

"From the whole, therefore, it must follow that a necessity, supposed possible, and reconcilable with the constitution of things, does in no sort prove that the Author of Nature will not, nor destroy the proof that He will, finally, and upon the whole, in His eternal government, render His creatures happy or miserable, by some means or other, as they behave well or ill. Or, to express this conclusion in words conformable to the title of the chapter [chap. vi.], the analogy of Nature shows us that the opinion of necessity, considered as practical, is false."

The final chapter of the first part of the treatise deals with a difficulty felt by many, and regarded by some as an objection both to natural and revealed religion. This is that they contain a number of things which we cannot understand, and the reason of the existence of which we are unable to comprehend. For example, why should evil exist at all, or why should it be so powerful and dominant? The explanation of such difficulties is that God's government is a vast scheme, with some few parts of which alone we are acquainted; if we knew more we should understand more. But, besides this, analogous difficulties exist in the natural world. We cannot understand the use of deserts, mountains, and arctic seas, nor can we explain many of the ways of God in His natural government, any more than in His spiritual government, although we can go some little way towards doing so by recognising things which in themselves appear merely evil as means, possibly necessary means, to good ends, and by realizing that the general laws which God imposes on the works of His hands, if they seem on occasion to produce harm, are yet on the whole more conducive to good than incessant interpositions.

From the first part, then, of Butler's treatise we learn: (1) That the dissolution of our bodies is no proof of the annihilation of ourselves, nor does it make such a result probable; (2) that the representation that hereafter God will reward virtue and punish vice is justified by the analogy of Nature, in which we see that He acts in a similar manner; (3) that the representation that the present life is a state of probation for a future life, and that it is intended by its trials and discipline to lead to our improvement, is similarly justi-

fied; (4) that if there are things that we cannot comprehend in religion, so there are in the world and its Providential government—and all this whether the doctrine of necessity be theoretically accepted or not. If, therefore, a man believes that the constitution of Nature comes from God—that is, if he be a deist—he is bound not to object to natural and revealed religion on any of the above grounds.

Passing on from the considerations which belong to natural and revealed religion in common to those confined specifically to revealed religion, the Bishop prefixes a chapter on the importance of Christianity. He was living in an age which was frankly irreligious and contemptuous of Christianity, and he therefore takes frequent occasion to remind his readers that they could not safely disregard revelation, even though they were but half, or less than half, convinced of the probability of its being true. Christianity is, Butler says, (1) an authoritative republication of natural religion; (2) an account of a new religious dispensation. Regarded as an inward principle, natural religion consists in religious regards to God the Father Almighty, and revealed religion in religious regards to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost in addition to God the Father. As soon as these relations are known (however they may be known), duties at once arise on our parts towards Christ and the Holy Spirit, such as reverence, honour, love, trust, gratitude, fear, hope and obedience, as well as those which we owe to God the Father. Revealed religion contains more than natural religion, but cannot be contradictory to it.

"Indeed, if in revelation there be found any passages the seeming meaning of which is contrary to natural religion, we may most certainly conclude such seeming meaning not to be the real one. But it is not any degree of a presumption against an interpretation of Scripture, that such interpretation contains a doctrine which the light of nature cannot discover, or a precept which the law of nature does not oblige to" (Part II., chap. i.).

Having set aside the *a priori* presumptions against revelation in general as being not discoverable by reason, and being miraculous, the Bishop proceeds to deal with the objections brought against the Christian revelation in particular. In every revelation, the Christian included, there must be things appearing liable to objections, for, speaking broadly, we are not judges of what a revelation is likely to be, or ought to be, but only of its evidence—that is, whether it comes from God or no. Reason can and ought to judge (1) of the meaning of revelation, (2) of its morality, (3) of its evidences. If reason goes beyond this and pretends to declare what is

or what is not to be expected in revelation, it passes out of its proper sphere, and is not to be listened to. Very often its objections can be met by the argument from analogy. For example, if it be maintained that it is incredible that Christianity, professing to be an expedient to recover the world from ruin, should have made its appearance so late, it may be answered from analogy that though men have from the beginning been liable to diseases, yet the remedies for those maladies remained unknown to mankind for many ages, and to a great extent are unknown still. Christianity being a scheme quite beyond our comprehension, it is to be expected that there would be many things in it that would be contrary to our expectations.

The chiefest objection brought against Christianity is that it teaches the appointment of a Mediator and the redemption of the world by Him. But the analogy of Nature removes all presumption against the use by God of the mediation of others. Our infancy is preserved by the instrumentality of others, and when we put ourselves in a position of danger, it is often only by another's coming to our relief, and our laying hold on that relief, that we can be saved. In some cases of misdoing fatal results must follow were it not for the assistance of others; and this, therefore, may be our case in respect to our future interests. Further, we often see that repentance alone is not sufficient to prevent evils that we have incurred falling upon us in this world, which may suggest to us that the same principle is likely to hold in respect to the future, and makes us ready to welcome the doctrine that God has given His Son to make interposition in such a manner as to prevent the punishment from actually falling, which would otherwise have followed on the transgression of the Divine laws. There are three ways in which Christ is our Mediator: (1) As Prophet, inasmuch as He introduced a new dispensation; (2) as King, inasmuch as He instituted and rules His Church; (3) as Priest, inasmuch as He offered Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, and made atonement for the sins of the world. In what particular way His sacrifice had this efficacy is not made perfectly evident, but the fact is clearly revealed. It has been objected to the doctrine that it represents God as punishing the innocent for the guilty. The analogy of Nature helps us to answer the difficulty. When in the daily course of natural providence innocent people are made to suffer for the faults of the guilty, this is liable to the same objection as that brought against the satisfaction of Christ. In ordinary life one person's sufferings often contribute to the relief of another, so that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every

day's experience. The objection, therefore, does not lie against Christianity any more than against the constitution of Nature, however mysterious to us, with our limited faculties, the Divine law may be. We must not expect fully to understand all God's laws, for "the constitution of the world and God's natural government over it is all mystery, as much as the Christian dispensation." We are not to expect as full information concerning the Divine conduct as concerning our own duty.

Another objection to revelation is that it was not universal, or made to all alike. "But we should observe that the Author of Nature in numberless instances bestows that upon some which He does not upon others who seem equally to stand in need of it; indeed, He appears to bestow all His gifts with the most promiscuous variety among creatures of the same species—health and strength, capacities of prudence and of knowledge, means of improvement, riches, and all external advantages. Yet, notwithstanding these uncertainties and varieties, God does exercise a natural government over the world," so that "the disadvantages of some in comparison of others respecting religion may be paralleled by manifest analogies in the natural dispensations of Providence at present, and considering ourselves merely in our temporal capacity" (chap. vi.).

A further objection to revelation is the supposed deficiency in the proof of it. The reason of this may be that we may be placed in a state of probation in respect to our intellects as well as to our moral practice. Speculative difficulties in respect to religion may make the principal part of some persons' trial, as temptations to ill-life do to others. Analogously, we have great difficulty often in deciding wherein our temporal interests really consist, and whether we have sufficient proof to justify us in pursuing one or another line in order to attain to them; yet in spite of this doubtfulness we do pursue it. In either case the doubt what we ought to do or believe is often the result of a man's own fault, but not always. After we have passed the best judgment that we can, the evidence upon which we must act often appears to us still doubtful.

Passing from the *a priori* objections to the Christian revelation, and the answers supplied to them by analogy, the Bishop comes to the particular evidence for it. This evidence is either direct or indirect. Its direct evidence consists in the attestation to its truth supplied by miracles wrought by those who were instrumental in propagating it, and in the fulfilment by it of prophecies already in existence. And besides these two which are "its direct and fundamental

proofs," there are also "collateral proofs," which, "however considerable they are, yet ought never to be urged apart from the direct proofs, but always to be joined with them" (chap. vii.).

With respect to miracles, the Bishop notes that there is equal historical evidence for them as for other facts in the Scripture narrative; that St. Paul bears independent testimony to their existence, declaring himself to be endued with the power of working them (Rom. xv. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 18), and recounting the many miraculous gifts which subsisted in the Church of Corinth; and that as an historical fact, Christianity demanded to be received, and was actually received, upon the allegation of miracles publicly wrought to attest the truth of it. The historical testimony to the Christian miracles is not to be done away with by the pleas that men are liable to be misled by enthusiasm; that cases may be found of men who were half deceived and half deceivers; and that false claims have been made to the miraculous in other instances. Testimony must as a rule be accepted, unless we find a want either of the *posse* or of the *velle* in those who give it.

On prophecy Butler remarks that "if a long series of prophecy delivered before the coming of Christ is applicable to Him, that is in itself a proof that the prophetic history was intended of Him," though each several prophecy be also applicable to events of the age in which it was written. Collateral evidence may be derived from the history and character of the revelation.

As the first part of the "Analogy" proved to the deist that objections to the doctrines of future rewards and punishments for good and bad conduct, and of this world being a state of probation for the next and for individual improvement, was untenable, because analogous to God's dealings under His Providential dispensation, so the second part proves to him that for the same reason objections to Christ's mediation and to redemption by Him, and cavils at the Christian revelation on the ground of its want of universality and an alleged deficiency in its proof, are untenable, and consequently that he is left free, without presumption to the contrary, to consider the particular evidence for Christianity.

There is not space to apply Butler's principles to the religious state of the present day and its needs in any detail; the following observations will be sufficient:

1. We must not give up our beliefs because we find that we have not demonstrative proof for them, but only probable evidence, which admits of higher and lower degrees, nor because objections lie against them, for everything is open to objections brought by us, owing to our imperfect knowledge.

2. We must confine reason to its proper work in matters of alleged revelation. That is, to discovering its meaning, judging of its morality, and examining its evidence. If reason usurps the right of criticising and approving or condemning the several doctrines of the revelation acknowledged to come from God, it is not to be listened to.

3. Miracles are not to be regarded as vexatious excrescences which have to be thrust into corners, explained away, or apologized for, but as attestations by God to the teaching of those who are enabled by Him to perform them. Testimony as to their having been wrought is to be accepted on the same conditions as other testimony by those who believe in a divine governor of the world.

4. Prophecies of Christ are not to be evacuated of their Messianic meaning.[1]

A perusal of much of our modern theological literature will show that each of these warnings is greatly needed at the present time. We may derive them from a study of Butler's works.

F. MEYRICK.

ART. VI.—A PLEA FOR AN EFFECTIVE DIACONATE.

"THE extension of the Diaconate as a permanent vocation, to be exercised by those who do not forsake their worldly calling, is advocated by many as one great remedy for the dearth of clergy. It is supposed that the aid rendered by such men on one day in the week would be a great relief to the overburdened incumbents of our large parishes, whose Sundays are a ceaseless round of services in church and mission-room, and who require a larger staff of helpers than they can afford to employ."

The words here quoted occurred in an article in the CHURCHMAN of January, 1903 (p. 178). That article, having reference to the existing dearth of clergy, only dealt in a passing way with the proposal for the extension of the Diaconate, which is quite seriously advocated at the present time by some Churchmen. There is so much to be said in favour of that proposal that it is fitting to deal with the matter separately in a special article.

The remarks which have to be made will naturally fall

[1] According to Professor Cheyne, Messianic passages "simply mean that the people of Israel is to work out the Divine purposes on the earth, and to do them with such utter self-forgetfulness that each of its own successes shall but add a fresh jewel to Jehovah's crown" ("On the Psalms"). "That," he says, "is the fundamental idea of the Messianic Psalms," which are therefore neither typical nor predictive of the Messiah.