Minor Literary Writings and Erewhon Revisited

In 1885 Butler completed the composition of The Way of All Flesh, his only novel and following it he lost his literary inspiration. He got back his lost inspiration only once in Erewhon Revisited, his last book. During the period from 1885 (in which The Way of All Flesh was completed) to 1901 (in which Erewhon Revisited was published) Butler with enough leisure and financial security (Darwin's death in 1882 closed the period of controversy and the death of his father in 1886 offered him financial freedom and the ease of a settled and secured life) was given to undertake travel in Italy, to art connoisseurship, to act as a literary sleuth in the Knotty Homeric problem or in tracing his family pedigree in editing and compiling the materials of his grandfather's life and letters. For diversion he came back to the Darwinian controversy in Luck, or Cunning? in 1887 and The Deadlock in Darwinism in 1890, the two works already discussed in Chapter II of the present dissertation. During this autumn period of life, Butler was engaged in a travel in Italy, his second home, and in evincing interest in literary curiosity. The first section of this chapter is devoted to Ex Voto (1888), an Italian book
of travel and art; books on the Homeric problem—
A Lecture on the Humour of Homer (1892), On the Trapanese
Origin of the Odyssey (1893), The Life and Letters of
Dr. Samuel Butler (1894), The Authoress of the Odyssey (1897),
translation of the Iliad and the Odyssey (1898), Shakes­
peare's Sonnets Reconsidered (1899). The second section
deals with Erewhon Revisited (1901). The writings which
will be discussed in the first section reflect Butler's
spirit of quest, but they are not very vital from the stand­
point of his intellectual quest. So only a nodding acquain­
tance of these writings is shown. Erewhon Revisited, as a
major literary writing of Butler, rounds up his literary
career and is important from the standpoint of tracing his
intellectual quest and so it is discussed in details in the
second section.

Section I

After Luck, or Cunning? Butler's next published work
was Ex Voto, published in 1888. It contains an account of
the Sacro Monte or New Jerusalem at Varallosesia, which he
had omitted from Alps and Sanctuaries, because he felt that
it required a book to itself. Butler wrote:
In the preface of Alps and Sanctuaries I apologised for passing over Varallosoesia, the most important of North Italian Sanctuaries, on the ground that it required a book to itself.

-Ex Voto (1928 ed.), p. 17

Ex Voto is an endeavour on his part to fulfil this pledge. In this travel book Butler rescued two Italian artists - Gaudenzio Ferrari and Giovanni Tabachetti in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - from oblivion.

His interest in the Homeric problem is first evinced in A Lecture on the Humour of Homer, which was delivered at the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street, 30th January, 1892. Before starting his discussion on the humour of Homer Butler makes some general comments on the two epics. "I myself believe The Iliad to be entirely by a single poet." The leading ideas of the Iliad, according to Butler, are "love, war and plunder .... women throughout the Iliad is a being to be loved, teased, laughed at, and if necessary carried off." From this Butler concludes that the writer of the Iliad was a man. The pagan and anthromorphic behaviour of the Greek gods amused Butler and led him to think that the writer of

the epic must be a man of humour to attribute comic elements of everyday life to the Olympian gods. A good deal of this humorous spirit, according to Butler, is due to Homer's attitude to women who are shown to be quarrelsome and inconstant in their emotion.

Butler considers the Odyssey "as the better half or wife" of the Iliad. The irony in this epic directed at man, "the incredible ignorance of detail" leads Butler to the conclusion that it was written by a fascinating and brilliant girl, not by Homer. The writer, Butler guesses, is revealed in Nausicaa. Butler's tracing of humour in Homer made him near to Homer, because the possession of humour was a common quality between them.

On the Trapanese Origin of the Odyssey was published in 1893, and in it Butler made a wild conjecture of establishing Sicily as the site of the Odyssean story.

Butler's next writing was The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler "which was begun in 1889, and was completed

2. Ibid., p. 251
in its original form by the summer of 1894. Butler was asked to write a Memoir of his grandfather and in his attempt to do so he collected his grandfather's correspondence, interviewed Dr. Butler's ex-pupils and this book was the result of this labour of love.

Dr. Butler, the grandfather of Samuel Butler, was the renowned headmaster of Shrewsbury School and an efficient bishop of Leichfield. Without any liking for both the professions, Butler instinctively disliked Dr. Butler, the headmaster, without troubling to find out anything about him. Then, having come into possession of his grandfather's papers, he read them and discovered, much to his surprise, that the Bishop had been a most agreeable person, with none of the stuffiness, pomposity and hypocrisy he had attributed to him, but, on the contrary, broad-minded, friendly, and with ideas about education well in advance of his time and offering a sharp contrast with those of Dr. Arnold. The outcome was that Butler fell in love with the old gentleman, and wrote his life with the aim of making up for having

treated him so unjustly in the description of the Pontifex ancestry. The great merit of *Life and Letters* is that it lets Dr. Butler speak for himself, with the least possible intrusion of his grandson. The book earned praise from Queen Victoria, Gladstone and the fellows of St. John's. Butler was well-pleased with the reception of this book. But this appreciation was more for Dr. Butler than for the grandson.

Butler presents his grandfather's role as a pioneer educationist. Schoolmasters at the beginning of the last century were generally believed at best to be passionate, overbearing, three parts a pedant and the fourth part, a bully. But Dr. Butler, never cruel to his pupils, kept a watchful eye on their academic, intellectual and moral side. Dr. Butler in his age was a glaring exception as a teacher and the grandson establishes this fact with numerous letters of enquiries from his ex-pupils.

In Chapter IV of the first volume Butler writes:

Even though Dr. Butler had not changed the public school education from one end of England to the other, though he had never created a great school, and turned out a brilliant band of scholars, the foremost of whom
no doubt in some respects surpassed their teacher - even though he had done nothing but command his temper so admirably for so many years, I should still have thought no pains I could bestow upon his memory so great as that memory deserved.

In Chapter XX Butler traces a wave of indiscipline that rocked the public schools of England in the last quarter of the 18th century. When the movement in favour of establishing a classical Tripos at Cambridge was gathering to a head Dr. Butler published a pamphlet in which he severely dwelt upon the drawbacks of the Cambridge system of education. He pointed out the drawbacks of overemphasizing the importance of mathematics and the mathematical questions set as riddles and strongly forwarded the view that at Cambridge equal emphasis should be laid on metaphysical and classical learning.

In Chapter XX Butler quotes a letter, dated May 3rd, 1827, addressed to somebody (whom Butler fails to identify) and in that letter Dr. Butler clearly enunciated the principle of his education policy - "I am at least as anxious as any of my brethren respecting the moral as well as
intellectual improvement of the boys under my care."\(^1\) In another letter Dr. Butler wrote - "Incessant flogging only hardens the offender. It makes him callous to punishment, and takes off the edge of moral feeling instead of whetting it.\(^2\) At a time when incessant flogging was accepted as a general panacea to root out the ills of education this view of Dr. Butler deserves surely to be termed bold and original.

In connection with a discussion of Butler's criticism of the prevalent system of British education, as revealed in The Way of All Flesh, a background of the English system of education during the 19th century has already been outlined in Chapter IV of the present dissertation. Dr. Butler had a pioneering role in restoring the muddled situation to order and normalcy. This role of Dr. Butler is documented in his grandson's The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, Vol. I.

The second Volume of The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler contains Dr. Butler's views on the condition of contemporary Christianity as well as education. In a letter

2. Ibid, p. 397
Dr. Butler wrote of his plan to reform the church-system:

There is hardly any part of our ecclesiastical law which is not the offspring of the dark ages or of the ancient Roman laws. The house is too ruinous for repair; we ought to pull it down and build a new one.

*The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler* (Shrewsbury Ed, Vol. II, 1924) p. 6

Butler mentions the laudable Shrewsbury qualities—"sincerity, downrightness, hatred of sham, love of work, and a strong sense of duty."¹ which Dr. Butler sought to inculcate among his students.

In the concluding chapter Butler sums up his impression about his grandfather's contribution. Dr. Butler is remembered for introducing a new system of examination, for his immunity from the vice of "the fear of giving himself away."²

He "was contemplative as well as active;"³ and "His path once marked out for him, he became a soldier fighting upon

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2. Ibid, p. 443
3. Ibid, p. 444
a certain side, and on that side he would fight - chivalrous always to his opponents." His first concern was to do his best to his pupils and his second concern, after he became Archdeacon, was to serve the truest interests of the Church of England.

This evaluation of Dr. Butler as a leading educationist and as a pioneer in church-reform is not strictly relevant to trace Butler's intellectual quest. But this is of considerable importance from the standpoint of drawing the intellectual background of the early Victorian age.

Butler returned to the Homeric problem in The Authoress of the Odyssey, where and when she wrote, who she was, the use she made of the Iliad, and how the poem grew under her hands, and it appeared in 1897. Henry Festing Jones in his introduction to The Authoress of the Odyssey (Shrewsbury ed., 1924) wrote - "It may be said that we owe this book to Charles Lamb." Butler chanced to read Lamb's translation of parts of the Odyssey and this translation drew his mind

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1. The Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler (Vol. II), 1924 Ed. p. 444
to the problem of the epic. Butler got interested in the problem of the authorship and H.F. Jones stated this interest in the following manner:

"[..] Butler reread the poem in the original. It fascinated him. He was teased by its anonymity, and set to work puzzling over the problem of its authorship, saturating himself with it, and theorizing over its provenance. Then he must translate it. Being at the time full of his grandfather's Life, his progress was so slow that it took him five years to reach Circe."


The authorship of the Odyssey was a puzzling, and fascinating mystery to him. While translating the Odyssey it was not till he got to Circe that it flashed upon him that he was reading the work not of an old man, but of a young woman. Once this conviction flashed upon him he went on testing it in many ways. The result of this testing was that he came to the conclusion that the poem had been written at Trapani in Sicily and that the writer herself appeared in it in the guise of Nausicaa.

In support of his theory Butler states that the names of famous poetesses abounded in the earliest records of Greek
literature. In it feminine interests predominate, it emphasizes scenes of domestic and social life, it offers vague descriptions of sports, combats and nautical adventures. The errors and absurdities in these descriptions, according to Butler, strengthens the theory of female authorship. The frequent borrowings from the Iliad also corroborate Butler's theory.

Gilbert Cannan in his book on Butler calls the Odyssean theory of Butler "the most splendid hobby horse."\(^1\) Malcolm Muggeridge, another leading critic of Butler, supports the statement of Gilbert Cannan and detects signs of senility in The Authoress of the Odyssey.\(^2\) But John F.Harris in his book on Butler refutes these and says that it was a product of his conviction.\(^3\) In a letter written to Prof. J.E.B.Mayon on 27th July, 1897 Butler wrote on his theory about The Authoress of the Odyssey - "I need hardly say that I am very much earnest about it myself, and believe it to be much the most important thing I have done."\(^4\) The theory of the Odyssey

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2. The Earnest Atheist (1971 Ed.) - Malcolm Muggeridge, p. 248
was a serious conviction with Butler. People were misled with Butler's levity in it. Butler knew that his theory was subversive, and remembering that a little levity would often save a good heavy thing from sinking, intentionally treated the subject in a way in which he hoped would make it attractive.

To the students of literature the importance of Butler's preoccupation with the Homeric problem lies in his translation of the Iliad and the Odyssey, published in 1898. In this translation Butler took upon himself the responsibility of interpreting to the modern world the two Homeric epics. Butler's idea of a good translation was that it should re-create for the new times and the new environment of language, and not mummify with what he called 'Wardour Street' English, the living force of the original. His translations

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1. "Wardour Street! English - "Perhaps it should be explained that Wardour Street was then a street of theatrical costumeries and that Butler took it to symbolize the pseudo-archaic language of Butcher and Lang's famous translation."

-Foot Note of Samuel Butler the Incarnate (1967 Ed.) - Philip Henderson, p. 167
were colloquial and aggressively modern at a time when such things were not done. This translation aimed a hit at the popular translation of Butcher and Lang. The 'Wardour Street' English used in their translation irritated Butler and led him to a translation rendered in an ultra-colloquial style. Butler felt that the Odyssey, being absolutely without affectation, should be unaffectedly told. So his language displays a benevolent leaning towards Tottenham Court Road. In the translation of the Iliad, he achieved, while remaining colloquial, a more notable type of prose and produced a vividly moving narrative.

Butler turned to read the Iliad and the Odyssey in course of his search for a suitable subject for his music which he contemplated to write in the Handelian manner. This reading of Homer led him to read Shakespeare's plays and poems. This growth of renewed interest in Shakespeare resulted in his Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, published in 1899. Butler accepted the sonnets revealing Shakespeare's private feelings. The friend mentioned by Shakespeare, according to Butler, was neither William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke nor Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. To this problem also Butler applied "the simple method of
Butler could not arrive at a definite conclusion about the identity of Mr. W.H. But he had no doubt about the authenticity of the calumnious story told in the sonnets. Butler felt that in the plays there was a veil over the face of their author, but the sonnets were "Shakespeare's Letters", "the unguarded expression of the inmost feelings of one whose privacy should have been more especially and particularly sacred."  

To establish the theory of the scandalous interpretation of the sonnets Butler arranged the sonnets according to the order of his personal taste. He concluded that the sonnets were Shakespeare's earliest work, that Shakespeare was very young when he wrote them, that his relation to W.H., a worthless fellow undeserving of his love, never went beyond intense devotion. He also thought that this was an aspect

1. **Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered** (Shrewsbury Ed., Vol.14, 1925) - Samuel Butler, Intr. p. xvii
2. Ibid, p. 121
3. Ibid
of Shakespeare's Youthful emotional life which he completely outgrew, there being no evidence of any similar episode in any of his later works.

Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered appeared at the end of October, 1899 and his friend Paoli died in the same year. Butler was drawn to the sonnets in the first instance by the parallel he must have seen between Shakespeare and his friend on the one hand and his own relations with Paoli. This was a brave book to be written by Butler in the closing years of the Victorian era, with the hue and cry following the scandal involving Oscar Wilde still in the air. But the work, apart from illustrating a spirit of quest, is of minor value from the standpoint of Butler's intellectual quest.

Section II

All the writings discussed above, composed during the period ranging from 1888 to 1889 were minor literary works.

1. Paoli – Butler met Paoli in New Zealand. Paoli, a Winchester man, employed on the press, came to England with Butler for better medical treatment and for his study to go to the bar. He sponged on Butler for a long time, even after his financial independence. Butler came to know of his duplicity only after his death. A homosexual relationship between them is hinted by Butler's biographers.
which indicate a period of artistic sterility the cause of which may be traced to the absence of any controversy in Butler's life.

Erewhon Revisited, a sequel to Erewhon (1872), illustrating Butler's concept of Utopia, is the last major writing of Butler and it is an important work in the context of his intellectual quest. It was started in the early winter of 1900 and was published in 1901, May 1. Longmans refused to publish it, even at Butler's own expense. Butler sent it to Bernard Shaw and with Shaw's intervention his publisher Grant Richards agreed to publish it. "He was the first publisher to take a financial risk with any of Butler's books."  

In the Preface of his first edition Butler gave an account of the genesis of Erewhon Revisited. Erewhon, his Utopian romance, was published in 1872 and it ended with Higgs's escape in a balloon from Erewhon with Arowhena. The future effect of his so-called miraculous incident on the people of Erewhon crossed Butler's mind at that time, but his

1. Samuel Butler, the Incarnate Bachelor (1967 ed.)- Philip Henderson, p. 216
mind was too occupied with other problems to give a satisfaction to his mind by writing another book on Erewhon. To trace the effect of Higgs's so-called miraculous ascent on the people of Erewhon Butler wanted a time gap of twenty years so that the new impact took a permanent shape. But in 1892 at a gap of 20 years after Erewhon in 1872 Butler was busy with his books on the Homeric problems, the Shakespearean sonnets and his bulky biography of his grandfather. So he could not spare time to return to the Erewhonian theme. In his Preface of the first edition of Erewhon Revisited Butler wrote:

.... in 1892 I was too busy with books now published to be able to attend to Erewhon. It was not till the early winter of 1900, i.e. as nearly as may be thirty years after the date of Higgs’s escape, that I found time to deal with the question above stated, and to answer it, according to my lights, in the book which I now lay before the public.

(Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.), Preface p. v)

The foregoing is Butler's own account of how the idea of writing Erewhon Revisited came to his mind. But at the insistence of H.F. Jones Butler wrote a note on how Erewhon Revisited was written. Butler in this note clearly denied
that the second book had been in his contemplation during his writing of Erewhon - "I had no intention of writing a successor to Erewhon for many a year after it had been published."¹ He also wrote in this note - "I took whatever suggested itself at the moment as giving me an opportunity for helping the new book to catch on to the old one."²

Controversy was congenial for the flowering of Butler's creative urge. But Darwin's death in 1882 and his father's death in 1886 removed all the sources of controversy from his life. Following his father's death the economic hardship was over and the complacency of his settled and secured life was inimical to the flourish of his literary talent. By 1900 the spring of Butler's literary inspiration dried up and he returned to the theme of romantic Utopia (in Erewhon Revisited) with which he started his literary career.

Erewhon Revisited deals with two themes - growth of a religious myth out of an ordinary natural phenomenon and the feeling of a father towards a hitherto unknown son. Higgs

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² Ibid
during his second visit to Erewhon found out that his natural escape in a balloon, described at the end of Erewhon, had been interpreted as miraculous and it gave birth to the cult of sunchildism around his own self, worshipped as a sunchild. People like Prof. Hanky and Prof. Panky, for their own self-interest, deceived the common people by craftily manoeuvring the growth and flourish of a false cult. People like Yram, her son George, Prof. Logomachy, Mrs. Humdrum knew the cult to be untrue, but considered it expedient not to be heretical. They wanted the false cult to be kept as an ideal around which the best ideas of the people were to gather. The second theme, namely, the picture of a happy family and the respectful love of an adult son for a father, hitherto unknown, is, to some extent, melodramatic.

Erewhon Revisited is a major literary work of Butler and it contains considerable criticism of the different aspects of his contemporary life under the garb of a Utopian vision of life. In this Utopia two aspects of Butler's intellectual quest - namely - evolving a rational and workable version of Christianity and criticism of some social aspects - are present. The theme of the book is to subject Christianity to a ruthless attack and finally to accept it
as a practicable ideal based on falsehood. Without an ideal, based on popular concept of morality, human yearning for the absolute will come to a dead end halting any zeal for progress and development. Butler's theory of panzoism, another important constituent of his intellectual quest, is gingerly touched upon in the chapter entitled President Gurgoyle's pamphlet On the Physics of Vicarious Existence. Butler's attempt to reconcile science to a rational version of religion is hinted at in Chapter XIV - "Science as well as sunchildism." Social criticism of miscellaneous nature on the growing menace of professionalism, the institution of Reformatory, the existing system of education is present in Erewhon Revisited. The gospel of sticking to the mean and avoidance of extremes are instances of Butler's favourite dialectical habit of mind.

Section III

Criticism of Christianity

The attack on Christianity forms the leading idea of Erewhon Revisited. Butler's attitude to Christianity is

1. Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) - Samuel Butler, p. 179
characterised by an ambivalence which colours his general attitude to life. He was opposed to the supernatural accessories of Christianity. The account of Jesus's Resurrection was accepted by Butler as a latter-day addition (this was the leading idea of *The Fair Haven*) and to him it was not essential for the acceptance of Christianity. But it has exerted a profound impact to mould and shape the moral life in the form of an ideal. How a new religious cult suddenly comes into existence and how supernatural accretions gather round it - such is, according to Butler's own ostensible avowal, the theme of *Erewhon Revisited*.

The parallelism between Sunchildism and Christianity is obvious in *Erewhon Revisited*, in spite of Butler's blatant denial of it. In a letter written on 10 February, 1901 to Mrs. J.A. Fuller Maitland Butler explained the use of his sunchild-myth in *Erewhon Revisited* and strongly affirmed that while writing it he had no desire to attack either Christ or Christianity. He wrote to the lady:

1. *Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.)*  
   Samuel Butler, Preface vi
Pray believe me I never meant any allusion whatever to the Founder of Christianity. I meant to show how myth, attended by zealous good faith on the part of some and chicane on the part of others, would be very naturally developed in consequence of a supposed miracle, such as a balloon ascent would be to a people who knew nothing about such things; and I meant to suggest a parallelism not between the Sunchild and Christ (which never entered my head) but between the circumstances that would almost inexorably follow such a supposed miracle as the escape of a Sunchild, and those to have accreted round the supposed miracle, not of the Ascension, but of the Resurrection. And I did not mean to poke fun at Christianity.


Mr. Quiller Couch in his criticism of Erewhon Revisited viewed it as a satire on Christianity. Butler contradicted it and firmly asserted that in writing the book this idea did not cross his mind. In support of his argument Butler said that if the parallelism had been effective Higgs should have been the son of Yram. But Butler wrote to Bernard Shaw:

Longmans have had the MS nearly a month and will not publish it even at my expense; they say it will give offence to their connection amongst the High
Anglican party - which I should think not improbable, for it is far more wicked than Erewhon.

'The Earnest Atheist (1971 Ed.) - Malcolm Muggeridge, p. 251'

This private letter to Bernard Shaw is a clear evidence that the purpose behind the book was to attack Christianity, though publicly he did not admit it.

In Chapter XXIV of Erewhon Revisited Mr. Higgs, being asked about what is to be done about Sunchildism by Prof. Downie and Prof. Hanky and Prof. Panky, gives out his opinion. This speech of Higgs admirably brings out Butler's attitude to Christianity. Higgs says:

Our religion sets before us an ideal which we all cordially accept, but it also tells us of marvels like your chariot and horses, which we most of us reject. Our best teachers insist on the ideal, and keep the marvels in the background.

'Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) - pp. 278 - 279'

Higgs further advises - "if you cannot abolish me altogether, make me a peg on which to hang all your best ethical and spiritual conceptions."¹ The Erewhonian Musical Bank stands

¹ Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) - Samuel Butler, p. 279
for the Christian clergy and the Church. According to Higgs –

Musical Bank people bear witness to the fact that beyond the kingdoms of this world there is another, within which the writs of this world's kingdoms do not run. This is the great service which our church does for us in England, and hence many of us uphold it, though we have no sympathy with the party now dominant within it.

Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) – p. 280

Here Butler's antipathy to Anglicanism is obvious. He upholds the church and the clergy as they profess to lift ordinary human mind from the morass of petty, humdrum existence. Higgs continues –

'Better', we can think, 'a corrupt church than none at all'. Moreover, those who in my country would step into the church's shoes are so corrupt as the church, and more exacting. They are also more dangerous, for the masses distrust the church, and are on their guard against aggression, whereas they do not suspect the doctrinaires and faddists, who, if they could, would interfere in every concern of our lives.

Ibid

Butler's early attitude to religion underwent a change following his awareness that there was no difference between
ego and non-ego - between the organic and the inorganic. Religion is based on the recognition of the spirit and the church tries to keep this conception alive. So on the basis of a common aim he felt himself closer to the church. But the yawning gulf of the creed of mechanistic determinism separating him from the scientists was unbridgeable to him. Moreover, the neglect he had to encounter from the scientists after the publication of his books on evolution painfully convinced him of the authoritarianism dominating and guiding the men of science. Prof. Hanky represents the unscrupulous and time-serving men of science. Higgs says to his son in his farewell advice -

But if Hankyism triumphs, come what may you must get rid of it, for he [\text{Hanky}] and his school will tamper with the one sure and everlasting word of God revealed to us by human experience.

\textit{Erewhon Revisited} (1923 Ed.) - p. 290

In the Preface to \textit{Erewhon Revisited} Butler advanced his claim to be a member of the English Broad Church - "I have never ceased to profess myself a member of the more advanced wing of the English Broad Church." But Butler's presentation

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{1} \textit{Erewhon Revisited} (1923 Ed.)
- Samuel Butler, Preface, pp. vi - vii
\end{thebibliography}
of Dr. Downie with his lukewarm attitude to life bears out that the cult of the Broad Church also is not without a tinge of irony. Higgs says - "Hanky is everything that we in England rightly or wrongly believe a typical Jesuit to be.*1 The Jesuits will welcome false accretions to religious faith - "his single eye will be upon his own aggrandisement and that of his order."2 "They [the Jesuits] believe everyone else to be as bad as they are."3 Prof. Hanky stands for an extreme ritualist. Higgs comments on Panky - "Panky must persuade himself of his own lies, before he is quite comfortable about telling them to other people."4

The workmen from the Fairmead Iron and Steel works while proceeding in a procession to Sunch'ton carried a banner which stated - "Science as well as sunchildism."5 Higgs holds both equally corrupt, but for a healthy balance he is in favour of retaining both. The argument of Higgs is very much Butlerian -

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2. Ibid, p. 288
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p. 289
5. Ibid, p. 179
As in our English body politic there are two parties opposed to one another, neither of which can thrive if the other is unduly weakened, so in our spiritual and intellectual world two parties more or less antagonistic are equally necessary. Those who are at the head of science provide us with one party, those whom we call our churchmen are the other. Both are corrupt, but we can spare neither, for each checks as far as it can the corruptious of the other.

*Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.), - pp. 289 - 290*

Butler's essential dialectical process of thinking is clearly manifested here. Higgs says to George -

Do what you will, you will not get perfect truth. And if you can follow the lead which I believe Dr. Downie will give you, that is to say, get rid of cock-and-bull stories, idealise my unworthy self, and as I said last night, make me a peg on which to hang your own best thoughts - Sunchildism will be as near truth as anything you are likely to get.

*Ibid, p. 290*

George is asked by Higgs not to be imprudent concerning popular belief. The line of steering the middle course is suggested - "You can do more by perfunctory acquiescence than by open dissent." 1 This casual statement appears to be innocent,

1. *Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.)*
   - Samuel Butler, p. 250
but bears an eruptive insinuatory implication against Christianity and its followers. The gospel of insincerity and hypocrisy is preached by Higgs. The subversive insinuation is that so many Christians follow their religion just to toe the popular line and this lip-deep religious trafficking is a more effective means to rid it than to oppose it openly. Dr. Downie's attitude to sunchildism admirably represents Butler's attitude to Christianity - a thing though false should be retained as an ideal after ridding it of the myths accreting round it.

Section IV
Criticism of academicians

Erewhon Revisited also carries a bitter attack on professionalism in the role of the two professors - Prof. Hanky, Royal Professor of Worldly Wisdom and Prof. Panky, Royal Professor of Unworldly Wisdom. Profs. Hanky and Panky, lexicographically mean, jugglers and the very names suggest the satiric purpose of Butler. They are impostors, liars, hypocrites, humbugs and unscrupulous exploiters of public feelings for self-aggrandisement. Without any scholarly attainment, both of them are thorough blackguards. "Panky
was the greater humbug of the two, for he would humbug
even himself and he had "a donning unwillingness to
allow anyone to be better informed on any subject than he
was himself." He "was hardly human; he had thrown him-
self so earnestly into his work, that he had become a
living lie." But Hanky was more notorious, as

his occasional frankness put people off their
guard. He was the mere common, superficial, perfun-
ctory Professor, who, being a Professor, would of
course profess, but would not lie more than was in
the bond; he was log - rolled and log - rolling, but
still, in a robust wolfish fashion, human.

\[Erewhon Revisited\] (1923 Ed.), pp. 39 - 40

The silence, the arrogance, the abuse that Butler had recei-
vied for thirty years from professional people - clerical,
scientific, artistic and literary - had its reply in Erewhon
Revisited. Philip Henderson writes upon this :

...... in it he \[Butler\] was able to have his
revenge in the persons of Profs. Hanky and Panky,

1. Erewhon Revisited (1923) - Samuel Butler, p. 39
2. Ibid, p. 37
3. Ibid, p. 40
on all the Birrells (Augustine) and Furnivalls (Dr.) and Andrew Langs and Huxleys - on, in fact, the whole academic, ecclesiastical and scientific world which had either ignored or misrepresented him for the last thirty years.

\[\text{Samuel Butler the Incarnate Bachelor (1967 Ed.)} - \]
Philip Henderson, p. 217

The academies of the Victorian Period too are subjected to severe satire in *Erewhon Revisited*. Higgs pays a visit to the provincial "Deformatory" at Fairmead and gets a chance to have a first hand knowledge of inculcating immorality through academies among children. At Fairmead Higgs comes across a man who

\[\ldots\text{ was complaining to the Mayor that his daughter, a lovely child of eight years old, had none of the faults common to children of her age, and, in fact, seemed absolutely deficient in immoral sense.}\]

\[\text{\textit{Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.)}, p. 116}\]

The father apprehended that the daughter was to be sent to a Deformatory for learning the "petty arts of deception".1

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so that "she must not fall an easy prey to any one who wished to deceive*¹ her. Mr. Turvey, the headmaster of the deformatory confessed to Higgs that they have to obey instructions from the Grand Council of Education at Bridgeford for teaching moderation in life. Children at school are taught insincerity, priggishness. Classes on gambling, book-making and speculation are held. To demonstrate the mode of teaching at the Provincial Deformatory at Fairmead the headmaster asked - "why is it necessary to avoid extremes of truthfulness ?"² The head-boy answered - "Because, Sir, extremes meet, and extreme truth will be mixed with extreme falsehood."³ Satisfied with the answer, the headmaster said, "Truth is like religion; it has only two enemies - the two much and the too little."⁴ Truth should be moderated with falsehood - this concept is thoroughly Butlerian. Honesty "does not consist in never stealing, but in knowing how and where it will be safe to do so."⁵ While commenting on this

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1. Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) - Samuel Butler, p. 116
2. Ibid, p. 157
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, pp. 157 - 158
5. Ibid, p. 158
system Higgs says - "it is the one adopted in the law-courts, and it lies at the foundation of party government."

Butler's satire of the law courts and party government is obvious here. Mr. Turvey, the headmaster further sums up-

"... it is obviously better to aim at imperfection than perfection; for if we aim steadily at imperfection, we shall probably get it within a reasonable time, whereas to the end of our days we should never reach perfection. Moreover, from a worldly point of view, there is no mistake so great as that of being always right."

\[\textbf{Erewhon Revisited} \textit{(1923 Ed.)}, \ p. 159\]

The whole thing is a satire on the conventional system of morality - teaching. The name 'Deformatory' invented as a parallel to 'Reformatory', is itself satirical. But it illustrates Butler's usual habit of viewing a thing in an inverted manner in which an ordinary thing appears in extraordinary light. The speech of Mr. Turvey embodies Butler's serious belief along with a satiric intention. This interplay of levity and seriousness is a common characteristic of Butler's process of thinking. In one entry of his \textit{Note Books} he wrote:

1. \textit{Erewhon Revisited} (1923) - Samuel Butler, \ p. 159
"There is no such source of error as the pursuit of absolute truth."

/The Note Books of Samuel Butler, ed. H.F. Jones, 1919, p. 298/

In another entry he wrote:

"Truth consists not in never lying but in knowing when to lie and when not to do so."

/Ibid, p. 299/

The Way of All Flesh also reflects almost identical idea -

"... extremes are alone logical, and they are always absurd; the mean is alone practicable and it is always illogical."

/The Way of All Flesh, 1968 Ed. Ch. LXIX, p. 267/

The context is satirical, but the statements embody Butler's serious convictions. This is further borne out by a sentence in Erewhon Revisited - "Resist good, and it will fly from you. Sunchild's sayings, xvii. 2"¹ This sentence is a slight modification of an entry of his Note Books -

"Resist God and he will fly from you."

/Samuel Butler's Note Books (1951 Ed.)- Ed. Keynes & Hill/

1. Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) - Samuel Butler, p. 157
With a minor alteration of a single word a serious statement turns into a humorous one.

The academicians are severely satirized in the role of Dr. Downie, Professor of Logomachy, who is regarded as the most subtle dialectician in Erewhon. His textbook on the 'Art of Obscuring Issues' had passed through ten or twelve editions. Dr. Downie had earned a reputation

.... for sobriety of judgement refusing to have definite views on any subject; so safe a man was he considered, that while still quite young he had been appointed to the lucrative post of Thinker in ordinary to the Royal Family.

[Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.), p. 89]

The wooliness of academicians has been subjected here to a severe satire.

Section V
Miscellaneous Social Criticism

Apart from containing criticism of academies and academicians, Erewhon Revisited abounds also in social criticism of miscellaneous nature. In Chapter XIV of Erewhon Revisited Butler makes Higgs say - "God cannot alter the
past, historians can; .... Painters can do all the historians can, with even greater effect."¹ The picture of Spiritual Atheletics in Chapter VII is a satire on conventional method of spiritual training. Miss La Frime, the Lady President of the principal establishment for the higher education of young ladies, published her primer on the 'Art of Man-Killing' which became tremendously popular in Erewhon. Public euphoria for unaccountable reasons has been hit at in this account. Mrs. Humdrum, a transposed version of Goddess Ydgrun or Mrs. Grundy has been presented as a sober lady who is no longer an object of repulsion to mature Butler.

Chapter XI is devoted to describe President Gurgoyle's pamphlet 'On the Physics of Vicarious Existence' which aims at tracing the impact of sunchildism on the Erewhonians. The whole thesis successfully obscures the issue discussed in it. But, evaluated apart from the background, it contains many statements expressing Butler's sincere belief in many things, already expressed in The Fair Haven, Life and Habit and other books on evolution. President Gurgoyle writes -

¹. Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) - Samuel Butler, p. 169
"For to live is to be influenced, as well as to influence."\(^1\) or "that there is no such thing as either absolute life without an alloy of death, nor absolute death without an alloy of life."\(^2\) – are sincere beliefs of Butler. He writes in his Note Books:

There is birth in death and death in birth. We are always dying and being born again.

\[\text{The Note Books of Samuel Butler, Ed. H.F. Jones (1919 Ed.), p. 15}\]

To die is but to leave off dying and do the thing once for all.

\[\text{Further Extracts from the Note Books of Samuel Butler, Ed. A.T. Bartholomew (1934 Ed.), p. 283}\]

C.E.M. Joad in his book on Butler writes on this:

Now this vicarious life is lived by every one of us after death just as truly as it is lived in life. In life the life we are living in others' pains or delights us according as others think ill or well of us.


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1. Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.) – Samuel Butler, p. 132
2. Ibid, p. 133
Moad further writes:

Immortality then, is existence in other men's thoughts and lives, and this existence continues unbroken by the bodily accident we call death.

Samuel Butler - C.E.M. Joad (1969 Ed.), p. 139

This incorporation of serious belief in the context of an amusing occasion brings out the essential duality of Butler's nature. In one of his entries in his Note Books he writes:

Some complain of me that they never know whether I am not laughing, and others that they are never sure but what I am in earnest.

Further Extracts from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler, Ed. A.T. Bartholomew (1934 Ed.), p. 63

This note attests the fact that he was fully aware of the existence of a deliberate contradiction in his nature as well as in his writings.

Malcolm Muggeridge has called Erewhon Revisited a "pure melodrama,"¹ on the basis of Butler's writing on the second leading idea of the book -

¹ The Earnest Atheist (1971 Ed.) - Malcolm Muggeridge, p. 251
I mean the story of a father trying to win the love of a hitherto unknown son, by risking his life in order to show himself worthy of it - and succeeding.

Samuel Butler, Author of Erewhon A Memoir—Vol. II (1919 Ed.)—H.R. Jones, p. 357

But to call this book a melodrama is a shallow oversimplification. It will be far better to accept Clara Stillman's comment on the book—

It was his last book not only chronologically but in an inner sense as well, a summing up and testamentary disposition of the thoughts and emotions that had occupied him most and been of greatest significance in his experience.


Section VII

Erewhon Revisited – a Utopia

Butler started his literary career with Erewhon, and rounded it up with Erewhon Revisited. Both the writings are imaginative adventures in the realm of nowhere. This preoccupation with the utopian theme brings out the essentially
The idealistic nature of Butler's vision of life. *Erewhon* is the writing of a young writer bubbling with brimming ideas spilling in all directions and in it Butler's satire of society lacks the clamp of artistic discipline in respect of structure. The second book is better constructed and is under more discipline. It contains criticism like that of *Erewhon* and this criticism is more well-directed. Higgs, the priggish hero of *Erewhon* has been considerably sobered by the adverse experiences of life. The character of Yram "has both instinctive and civilised excellence" and "she has intelligence, a sense of proportion, devotion, loyalty and common sense". Yram demonstrates Butler's enriched perception and understanding of female psychology. The picture of Yram's family life, based on understanding and agreeable faith, is somewhat unexpected from Butler, a confirmed bachelor, dreading family life as a fetter. The feeling of Higgs on knowing George as his son also is delineated with the softest touches and in this picture Butler's eagerness for filial love and affection gets an ineffable expression. This picture of a happy family life is to be

2. Ibid.
taken as a landmark in the history of Butler's emotional 
life and it directly contravenes the principle of his 
bitter opposition to the family as an institution finding 
expression in The Way of All Flesh and in many entries of 
his Note-Books.

Butler's wistful longing for a son gets embodied in 
George who, like Towneley in The Way of All Flesh, is a 
model of Butler's 'nice' persons. He is born of a marriage 
which proves to be illegal (similar is the case with the 
children of Ernest in The Way of All Flesh). Y-zam's open 
avowal of his unnatural birth, her husband's docile accept­
ce of the fact, George's proud acknowledgement of his 
illegal birth, the discomfiture of two shrewd professors 
in the hands of George - all these remind the readers that 
they are in a land of romance and Utopia. The hushed 
rumour regarding George's birth current in the public brings 
this romance closer to reality.

P.N.Furbank in his book on Butler says on Erewhon 
Revisited - "The passion of Erewhon Revisited is in a way 
the passion of self-contempt. Self-contempt here takes the 
form of prostration before the child."¹ Furbank observes

1. Samuel Butler - P.N.Furbank, 1971, p. 89
the predominance of adolescence in many other works of Butler. The acceptance of this view of Furbank is fraught with a dangerous insinuation regarding Butler's maturity of outlook. If Furbank is right, then the edge of seriousness from Butler's preoccupation with the problem of reconciling religion with science, of his biological preoccupation and of his social criticisms - is taken away. Evaluated in the scale of Furbank, Butler will emerge as a naughty, fuming and fretting adolescent, as the adult world did not fit in with his idea of a nursery. Furbank examines Erewhon Revisited, News from Nowhere and The Coming Race as utopias and comments:

The occupation of the typical nineteenth-century utopia is the cultivation of innocent enjoyment, and for that the child is as well fitted as any one. The extraordinary juvenility of the world of News from Nowhere and that of Erewhon Revisited is a logical consequence of the initial assumption of a settled and unquestioned political system.

....This fantasy of innocent luxury is what the average person connects peculiarly with the word 'utopia', and the thing noticeable about it is the juvenility of the life that it represents.
Furbank is reluctant to attribute the term Utopia to *Erewhon Revisited*. But the piercing satire of religion and society in it refutes the charge of Furbank that it deals with "a settled and unquestioned political system."¹ The presence of satire lending seriousness to the book also neutralises the charge of its being a "fantasy of innocent luxury."² The presence of a pervading spirit of romance in the book leads Furbank to find out juvenility in it. But *Gulliver's Travels* also, judged by prosaic standard, will appear as a romance. Furbank sums up his impression of *Erewhon Revisited* -

In the world - made - easy of the child's charade, the adult characters have no dignity, and feel the easier for it. The adult being treated as a child - the theme which we have noticed in Lytton and in Butler - has clearly a fascination for both these writers.

References:

2. *Ibid, p. 93*
It cannot be denied that *Erewhon Revisited*, compared with *Erewhon*, is mellower in tone and the cause of this mellowness can be attributed to Butler's growing age and the absence of general grievance of life. Butler gave a new lease of life to the form of Utopia and his lead persists even in the present century. Man, essentially idealistic by nature, refuses to be cabined and cribbed under the pressure of humdrum reality and dreams of an ideal world to come. Butler's credit lies in the fact that he resuscitated the long-disused form and utilised it as a medium to express his intellectual quest.

An ideological preoccupation with some contemporary social problems from the standpoint of framing some general theories is an essential constituent of Butler's intellectual quest. Compared with *Erewhon*, its sequel is deficient in this respect. No attempt is present here to reconcile religion and evolutionism, but the whole Utopia is chiefly preoccupied with the problem of 'to be' or 'not to be' of Christianity. Butler's final and positive acceptance of Christianity as an expedient ideal, false but necessary, forms the main basis of Butler's intellectual quest in this writing.