

A Life of Study, Prayer, and Action: the Feminist Christianity of Josephine Butler

ASA JAMES SWAN

Since the beginning of the feminist movement over a century ago, historians have debated the role religion played in the lives of the great British women's rights leaders. Olive Anderson dismissed any agency religious experience gave to these women, contending that it "contributed nothing to the spread of feminist ideas."¹ Gail Malmgreen described their spirituality as a "central paradox" that historians struggle to keep in context while discussing their subjects' lives and work.² She went on to point out that religion is a neglected part of feminist history, yet historically there is a direct connection between faith and political activism within the feminist movement.³ In response to these works and others, Helen Mathers made a simple yet profound point: many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist leaders were devout Christians who drew upon faith as their main source of inspiration and strength, so a study of their beliefs is crucial to understanding their lives.⁴ Josephine Butler was one of these leaders.

Josephine Butler was born in 1828, the daughter of Anglican parents who sympathized with the evangelical movement. Her passionate faith in God birthed her political activism; she entered the world of national politics by advocating for greater educational opportunities for all women and more property rights for married women in particular.⁵ In 1869, she began campaigning against the Contagious Diseases Acts and remained to fight for greater equality and social justice for women until her death in 1906.⁶ The support of her husband and her intimate relationship with Jesus Christ sustained her during these hard years of struggle, relationships that have proven difficult for modern historians to grasp when considering her political beliefs.

Helen Mathers summarizes the "minefield" that surrounds Josephine Butler, where "there is still no consensus among historians about [her] religion." Historians like Moberly Bell, Nancy Boyd, and Jane Jordan have documented the details of Josephine's life in their biographies, but they either avoid a concise description of her religious convictions or misinterpret her feminist Christianity, struggling to portray accurately her belief system. Like many of her Christian contemporaries, Josephine's faith compelled her to activism, but what specific beliefs about God did she hold? In other words, what did her personal form of Christianity look like? And building upon this, why did Josephine's faith lead her to action, and how did she interpret this action as what we would now call feminism?

Historians misunderstand Josephine due to their failure to consider the complex personal dynamic of her life: despite her

feminism, religious fervor, and (seemingly) evangelical beliefs, she adhered to no set denominational theology and rejected the contemporary interpretation of the Apostle Paul's submission passages in the NT. Even assigning her the label "evangelical" is debatable, largely due to the ongoing transformation of the Church of England and other denominations during this time as a result of the Nonconformist movement. Being unable to categorize her, historians struggle to make sense of her theology, personality, and politics because they lack the proper context in which to study her.⁷

In order to define this context better, several questions must be asked. What spiritual legacy did she inherit from her parents, and how did it shape her? What experiences led her to find a call from God to fight for women's rights? How did Josephine's husband support her in her quest? How did she interpret the Bible, especially when it seemed to contradict her beliefs, and what religious beliefs did she embrace? And finally, as she led the repeal fight, to what extent were her personal efforts a part of either nondenominational or multi-denominational movements?

Fortunately for the modern reader, Josephine was a prolific writer, and a thorough review of her letters, speeches, and published works provides answers to these questions. These writings show that four main factors shaped her worldview: the legacy of evangelicalism and political activism she inherited from her family, her mystical religious experiences, the unequivocal support of her husband

George, and the example and teaching of Jesus Christ that guided her life. All of these factors empowered her to become the national leader she believed God called her to be. This article will show how, because she refused membership in any particular denomination throughout her life, this internal set of beliefs shaped her individually and, as a consequence, guided her life of social justice and feminist action.

Family Legacy

Josephine Elizabeth Grey was born to John and Hannah Annett Grey at their estate of Milfield Hill in Glendale, Northumberland, on the border of Scotland.⁸ Josephine was the seventh of nine surviving children, and she entered a loving family with a rich heritage.⁹ Of her family members, her father had the greatest influence on her life, followed by her mother and her sister Harriet.

Like his daughter, John Grey was a product of Glendale. Born in 1785, his father passed away when John was eight, yet his mother Mary Grey cheerfully raised all four children by herself and ran the Grey estate until she handed over management to John when

Many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist leaders were devout Christians who drew upon faith as their main source of inspiration and strength.

he turned eighteen.¹⁰ His sister Margaretta told a young Josephine in the 1840s that women needed to fully participate in society, saying, "It is time to rise out of this, and for women of principles and natural parts to find themselves something to do."¹¹ In the years before the House of Commons opened up a Ladies' Gallery, Margaretta also disguised herself as a boy and snuck in to listen to their debates.¹² Needless to say, John grew up in a household of strong women, and Josephine always remembered the confident, outspoken, and large presences of her grandmother and aunt.¹³

Next to his family, John possessed two great loves in life: political activism and Christianity. As a loyal Liberal for most of his adult life, his political beliefs flowed from deep within his being. Josephine wrote of him, "God made him a Liberal," with a devout belief in the individual rights of all mankind and an opposition to oppression in all its forms.¹⁴ She further explained, "In the cause of any maltreated or neglected creature he was uncompromising to the last, and when brought into opposition with the perpetrators of any injustice he became an enemy to be feared."¹⁵ His cousin Earl Grey served as prime minister under William IV, and Lord Grey relied on John to rally support from northern England, where he was already known throughout the region as a fervent abolitionist who actively campaigned against slavery.¹⁶ John's involvement with the anti-slavery movement, the Reform Bill, and free trade piqued Josephine's interest in political matters at a young age.¹⁷ She vividly remembered the horror she felt at hearing about the sexual wrongs committed against female slaves by their male masters, as well as the family's celebration upon receiving news of abolition's passage in 1833 by Grey's administration.¹⁸

As much as Josephine drew upon her father's love of politics, his faith had an even greater impact upon her. It seems that both Mary and John fell gravely ill around the time he was eighteen, and they turned to the Bible to soothe their souls. After both miraculously recovered, John determined to hold household prayers with the entire family every night, and this continued until his death.¹⁹ On Sunday nights, he would read the Bible to his family, focusing on his most cherished passages, of which the book of Isaiah was his favorite due to its verses about setting the captives free.²⁰ Josephine believed that her father's devotion to God made him into the kind, gentle, and loving man she treasured, and she wanted to be just like him.²¹

Hannah Annett Grey came from a long line of Protestants. Her maternal grandparents were forced to leave France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and upon arriving in England, "they were in the habit of opening their hospitable doors to everyone in the form of a religious teacher, of whatever sect, who happened to pass that way." The Annetts practiced charity toward followers of all forms of Christianity, including Catholics, but as the Nonconformist movement spread across the country, they joined in the evangelical revivals. A treasured Annett story that Josephine told her entire life involves her mother sitting in John Wesley's lap and having him pray a blessing over her.²² We know now that this

is a myth because Wesley died three years before Hannah's birth in 1794,²³ but it reflects the Annetts' denominational affinity with the Dissenters and explains biographer Glen Petrie's description of Hannah's youth as including a "strict Evangelical upbringing."²⁴

Josephine described Hannah as a strong yet gentle mother who taught her children by example. She possessed a sharp intelligence and quick wit, and since John's work required him to travel around the region, Hannah saw it as her responsibility to instruct the children.²⁵ The Greys agreed that all of their children should learn how to read and write, play music, and practice oratory. Growing up in a rural area where most families saw no need to educate their daughters, this was quite extraordinary. Each morning during the week, Hannah would arrange for them to study a book of some sort and read it aloud. This was followed by practicing their music and spending time outdoors. In later years, Josephine credited her drive for excellence to her mother, who taught her children to pursue every goal with determination and "moral discipline."²⁶

The final Grey family member to have a lasting effect upon Josephine's life was her sister Harriet. "Hattie" was Josephine's favorite and closest family member; they were a "pair" among the nine siblings.²⁷ As best friends until Hattie's death in 1901,²⁸ they shared a lasting camaraderie and solidarity.²⁹ As the years passed, Josephine often wrote more openly in her letters to her sister than to her own husband.³⁰ This relationship provided each sister with a loving friend throughout their lives, and it foretold of the affinity and allegiance Josephine would feel towards other women, especially those in need of help.

Growing up in the Grey family in Glendale prepared Josephine for the years of struggle ahead, and each of the three family members discussed above contributed elements to her unique individuality and worldview. In adulthood, she became like her father in personality and character. As Nancy Boyd points out, he is the one who taught her about the God of Christianity, a God of love and mercy for the repentant sinner.³¹ Despite living in a Dissenting neighborhood full of Methodists and Presbyterians, John took his family to Saint Andrew's Anglican Church while practicing religious toleration in all of his friendships.³² John purposefully discussed all areas of social and political life with his daughters,³³ encouraging them to become active in public life and influencing Josephine to embrace social justice by leading the effort to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, "prov[ing] herself her father's daughter."³⁴ During a speech to 700 working-class men in April 1870, she told the raucous crowd that her work was simply an extension of the Liberal Party reformist legacy of her father.³⁵

Through the daily example of both of her parents, and to a lesser extent her Aunt Margaretta, she learned how to become a strong, spiritual woman who retained her femininity while striving for excellence. This spiritual excellence included a hatred of injustice and the confidence to speak out against evil. In John and Hannah, Josephine saw the God of Christianity, a loving

being who actively worked in the daily lives of humankind to defeat evil and effect transformational change. Their “religious beliefs provided the basis for social action and the language in which affection was expressed in the Grey family.”³⁶ They were Anglicans, yet they held firm evangelical leanings and practiced hospitality to Christians from all denominations, including Catholicism.³⁷ Josephine also witnessed a healthy marriage where both partners supported each other in their political beliefs, and this birthed in her a desire to find a like-minded mate of her own.³⁸ Similarly, their love for their children, including Josephine, manifested itself in part as valuing all of their children’s gifts and abilities equally.³⁹ Finally, Josephine found strong allies in her mother, her aunt, and her sister Hattie, who served as a part of her support network for the rest of her life by encouraging her to fight for greater rights for women.⁴⁰

Developing A Faith of Her Own

Josephine’s early religious experiences while growing up in the Grey family laid a solid spiritual foundation for her Christian faith later in life. She thanked God for her father’s insistence on attending church every Sunday, but the pastor’s limited knowledge of God left her wanting to know more.⁴¹ This led her to attend local Methodist chapel services as a teenager, where she witnessed a revival that emerged during the visit of a circuit-riding Wesleyan evangelist. It was during one of these meetings that she felt the power of God fall upon her for the first time.⁴² Yet despite this religious encounter, she still felt that the world was “out of joint,” and she continued to be haunted by its injustices, the “cruelties practiced by man on man, by man on woman.”⁴³ Why were women so oppressed in their supposedly liberal society? How could “Christian England” justify its maltreatment of the Irish and other subject peoples, and why were the local clergymen unable to answer her hard questions about God?⁴⁴ This inner turmoil consumed Josephine at age seventeen when she entered into an experience reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas’s “dark night of the soul.”⁴⁵ For an entire year, she asked God to explain why his creation had become so evil. She wanted God to reveal himself to her, telling her of his heart for the world and giving her direction and peace. Finally, she wanted to know her position in him.⁴⁶

Josephine later compared her spiritual crisis to Jacob wrestling with an angel.⁴⁷ In the end, after listening to this “child wrestler” for an entire year, Josephine believed that God visited her, making her keenly aware of his “overwhelming presence” and flooding her soul with peace and reassurance. Josephine now felt safe in him, and her heart for the world changed as well.⁴⁸ Josephine wrote, “He did not deny me the request of His own heart’s love for sinners, and when He makes this revelation He does more; He makes the enquiring soul a partaker of His own heart’s love for the world.”⁴⁹ She emerged from this experience with a renewed faith and a compassion for those in need; her God was One of love and justice, and she never doubted this about him again.⁵⁰

Now secure in her relationship with God, she began to look for an earthly partner, and she found one in George Butler.

Christian Brother, Soulmate, and Friend

George Butler was born in Harron on June 11, 1819, the oldest of ten siblings.⁵¹ The Butlers were not an aristocratic family, but they were educated and well-respected.⁵² His father served in the ministry and wanted his son George to follow in his footsteps, but despite going through ordination, George felt no calling from God to do so at that time.⁵³ His mother Sarah, a Quaker, raised him to support equality for men and women.⁵⁴ Josephine met George in 1848 during his tutorship at the University of Durham.⁵⁵ During his time in college, he avoided bad company and, much to Josephine’s relief, remained chaste.⁵⁶ Most important for her, he loved Jesus Christ and spoke openly of his faith. His faith informed the most striking feature of his personality, his integrity. Out of this flowed all of his other commendable traits: devout loyalty to those he loved, his gentle spirit and mercy, and a passion for excellence and truth.⁵⁷

Probably due to the nine-year gap in their ages, Josephine’s early letters suggest a reverence for George as a father figure, but he quickly rebuffed this and encouraged her to view him as her equal partner. He refused to make decisions for her: she must allow God to guide her choices, clinging to Jesus Christ and his promises for her life.⁵⁸ During their engagement, George wrote his beloved frequently. These letters reveal a consistent theme of thankfulness for her, affirmation of her independent spirit, and the incredible gifts he believed God gave her. In one letter, George even wrote that she would be able to succeed without him.⁵⁹ He anticipated their marriage to be “a perfectly equal union, with absolute freedom on both sides for personal initiative in thought and action and for individual development.”⁶⁰ They were married at Dilston on January 8, 1852.⁶¹

The Butlers were indeed well-matched. They loved each other dearly; all of their correspondence repeatedly expresses this devotion. They delighted in each other’s company, and near the end of her life, Josephine reminisced about the long carriage rides they often took during their first two years of marriage.⁶² Uncharacteristically of this era, George agreed with his wife’s feminist goals; they were “instinctive to him,” especially equality for all humankind.⁶³ Early on, he saw his role as supporting her and cheering her up in bad times, and this included the “united work of bringing up our children.”⁶⁴ He was even willing to let his wife become the leader and public face of the repeal movement, while he performed a quieter role. For this she thanked him, writing in an 1869 New Year’s Eve letter, “I feel deeply how good it is of you, dearest, to lend me to this work.”⁶⁵ In a letter to Josephine several months before their marriage, George encouraged her to depend on his physical strength at all times, but added “in other matters I think you are more capable of giving me aid than of borrowing it.”⁶⁶ This loving, supportive role came at a cost, however: Josephine’s political activities

prevented George's promotion in the Anglican Church during his later years, but he refused to let it bother him.⁶⁷ He also never complained about her many absences, so she felt that the least she could do was to help nurse George in his ill health during his last sickly years.⁶⁸ At the time of his death in 1890, he remained the "light of [her] life."⁶⁹

George Butler's unequivocal support for Josephine was one of the primary factors in her success, and its importance cannot be overstated. "She could trust him utterly to sympathize with and support her," for George firmly believed that justice would eventually prevail, and sometimes in her darkest hours, Josephine needed to lean on this optimism for encouragement.⁷⁰ She told Millicent Fawcett that she would not have been able to lead her crusade "if I had not had such a man as my fellow worker and supporter." The story of her decision to enter the world of politics highlights this statement. During the fall of 1869, Josephine wrestled with the question of how to proceed regarding the Contagious Diseases Acts: was God calling her to lead the fight for their repeal? Fearing George would try to stop her due to his concern for her personal wellbeing and the inevitable attacks she would suffer, Josephine wrote him a note telling him of her conviction that this was God's will for her life. He spent a few days contemplating this course of action, not sharing any of his thoughts about it. Finally, on the third day, he communicated his decision with the words: "Go! and God be with you!"⁷¹ With George's support secure, she needed the strength to challenge the Acts, and she found it in her relationship with God.⁷²

The last crucial area of harmony between the Butlers involved their mutual faith. George and Josephine shared nearly identical theological opinions.⁷³ They agreed on the truth of Christ's teachings; his "actions and sayings were . . . revolutionary."⁷⁴ Josephine described George and herself as "rebels for God's holy laws."⁷⁵ They placed special emphasis on the cross and Christ's sacrifice there, referring to it as "the most real of all realities."⁷⁶ They loved to read the Bible together and discuss the meaning of Gospel stories.⁷⁷ Josephine's relationship with George molded and strengthened her religious zeal throughout the years, and the spiritual lessons learned and conclusions she formulated over time occurred in this context. It was a personal faith they built together.

Later Formative Religious Experiences

Three remaining events that molded Josephine's Christianity later in life must be described before we delve into a more concrete description of her religious beliefs. During the first years of her marriage to George, who was now part of the Oxford faculty, Josephine chafed at the misogynist sentiments of the vast majority of his colleagues in the Oxford community. She often found herself as the only woman in a group of intellectuals; it was difficult for her to remain silent when George's colleagues discussed issues on which she held strong opinions.⁷⁸ Josephine wrote that silence seemed to be their charge to women, even when confronted by injustice;⁷⁹ "every instinct of womanhood

within me was already in revolt against certain accepted theories in society, and I suffered as only God and my faithful companion could ever know."⁸⁰ Josephine took this lesson away from her trial in the masculine world of Oxford: "to speak little with men, but much with God."⁸¹

A second defining moment involved her five-year-old daughter Eva's tragic death in 1864. Upon returning home one evening from a night out, the Butlers were walking into their foyer when their four children ran to the top of the stairs, and little Eva tripped and fell over the banister, plummeting to her death.⁸² Josephine described her only daughter's fatal accident as the first major test of her faith since her "dark night of the soul" at age seventeen.⁸³ Despite this cruel misfortune, Josephine emerged with a deeper trust in God's love and provision; she credited her strengthened faith to feeling his close comfort throughout her grief.⁸⁴

Just over a year later, hoping to put her faith in action by ministering to those who had suffered as she had since Eva's death, Josephine visited the Brownlow Hill Workhouse for the first time.⁸⁵ This final life-changing experience brought her face-to-face with over 200 of Liverpool's outcasts, all of them women; she wrote that her heart broke for them. Josephine immediately joined in their oakum-picking work, which required hardened hands that she, as a middle class lady, did not have. After laughing at Josephine's inability to keep up with the rest of women (she laughed too), they began to tell her their stories, and Josephine began to share the Gospel with them as they opened up to her. At the end of her visit, she promised to return and encouraged them to memorize scripture so that they might discuss it. Her second visit witnessed a young women's recitation of John 14; as she spoke, the entire room quieted to listen. Upon finishing, Josephine entreated all of them to ask God for forgiveness of their sins, and the entire group fell onto its knees in supplication, praying and weeping as they called out to God. Josephine later wrote that their cries reached "to the heart of God."⁸⁶ Catherine Lynch, a former prostitute, thanked Josephine for ministering to her and said, "you wants to make us love God as you do yourself."⁸⁷ Josephine's encounter at Brownlow Hill strengthened two related areas: her confidence in her ability to reach out to other women, and her resolve to fight for the betterment of their lives. She had finally realized the elusive call of God for her future.

Despite its complexity and evolution as her life continued, the Christian faith Josephine practiced with such whole-hearted devotion can be divided into three main components: study, prayer, and action. As a lifelong student of the Bible, she spent countless hours reading her favorite stories and the lessons that accompanied them. Anyone in Josephine's presence quickly learned that she was familiar with all of scripture,⁸⁸ with a particular love for the Gospels.⁸⁹ From these Gospels she studied the life of her mentor and friend, Jesus of Nazareth, whom she wrote about extensively. The biblical texts also compelled her to pray, and this prayer life became one of her main outlets for dealing with problems, pain, and suffering. Finally, she interpreted the

teachings of Jesus Christ as a call to action, living a life of service on behalf of social justice for the poor and powerless in society, especially women. For Josephine, Jesus was the perfect man, and his interactions with men, women, and children set an example for all to follow.

Study, Prayer, and Action

One of the frequent themes of Josephine's writings was her love and reverence for Jesus Christ. In him, she found a personal savior, teacher, and liberator: "He is Very God, and that He was, in human form, the Exponent of the mind of God to the world."⁹⁰ She listed several reasons for this love: Jesus was born of a woman only; he was respectful and loving of women; he healed their feminine maladies; and he forgave even the most grievous of their sins.⁹¹ Also, Mary of Bethany was arguably his closest friend. Josephine and George both regarded Christ's crucifixion and resurrection as the central event in world history, setting an example of selfless sacrifice on behalf of others.⁹² This death and resurrection empowered sinners to throw off the bondage of sin by seeking God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice and being freed of their evil ways. When asked by a committee member how she would endeavor to get more people to join her cause against the Contagious Diseases Acts, she told the Royal Commission in 1871, "By showing them the example of Christ."⁹³ This example included her favorite characteristic of Jesus: his liberation of women.

Because Jesus shared some of his greatest thoughts and most intimate moments with women,⁹⁴ Josephine opened her treatise *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, written in 1869, with these words: "Among the great typical acts of Christ, which were evidently and intentionally for the announcement of a principle for the guidance of society, none were more markedly so than His acts towards women."⁹⁵ Later in her introduction, she listed three specific examples of stories from the Gospels that dealt with the liberation of women. All of them involved his reaching out to women, even when it was socially unacceptable. The love he showed them empowered the women to live fuller lives and told the world that God saw equal worth in women as well as men.⁹⁶

For Josephine, Jesus Christ affirmed "the principle of perfect equality . . . as the basis of social philosophy," in the way he treated all of those around him.⁹⁷ By rejecting the misogynistic social norms of his time, Jesus's "acts towards women" all involved raising their status in society and giving them love, hope, and purpose.⁹⁸ This transformation of women should have altered "men's treatment of women from that time forward," but instead, men refused to follow Christ's example and misapplied his teaching in order to protect their paternalistic order.⁹⁹ The example Jesus set in his interactions with women was one reason she considered it a joy to serve him, and her feminism was born from her desire to emulate this example.¹⁰⁰ Another joy was her love of spending time with him in prayer.

Prayer served as the foundation of Josephine's Christianity.¹⁰¹ It was "direct converse with God."¹⁰² As a joyful "communion

with a Friend,"¹⁰³ Josephine emphasized spending time with God in prayer, especially during her later years, and believed in God's power to guide, protect, and grow her through these times of meditation.¹⁰⁴ Prayer revealed God's will, and once his divine purpose was imparted, she felt empowered to perform his work.¹⁰⁵ This revelation also gave her greater compassion for those who were suffering and in need, writing, "He makes the enquiring soul a partaker in His own heart's love for the world."¹⁰⁶ Three years before her death, Josephine told her friend Fanny Forsaith in a 1904 letter that the Holy Spirit guided her in prayer, quoting from Rom 8 and asserting that "all my life . . . I have found the only teaching to be that of the Spirit of God."¹⁰⁷

The importance of prayer in her life was emphasized by her biography of Catherine of Siena, the fourteenth-century Italian saint. A reader of this work will quickly realize that Josephine loved Catherine because they shared so many similar qualities and passions. Catherine urged Pope Gregory to join her crusade to reform a corrupt church failing to live as Christ commanded.¹⁰⁸ She rejected the social stigma of ministering to prostitutes, encouraging them to reject their old, sinful ways and be transformed by returning to "the wounded side of the Son of God."¹⁰⁹ Finally, Catherine and Josephine shared a love of prayer. Josephine told her friends that Catherine's secret was "the constant converse of her soul with God," and the biography



With a

Charitable Gift Annuity

your donation not only supports Christians for Biblical Equality, it also provides an immediate charitable tax deduction and an annuitized income stream for life. It's a legacy that helps ensure the future expansion of CBE's ministry and makes a difference for generations.

For more information about charitable gift annuities,
call **612-872-6898**
or email **cbe@cbeinternational.org**

contains numerous prayers that Catherine lifted up to God, ones that are, at times, strikingly similar to Josephine's own.¹¹⁰ When confronted with criticisms about Catherine of Siena's messages from God, Josephine encouraged skeptics to devote their lives to prayer as she did, writing that God would speak to them in the same manner as he did with Catherine.¹¹¹

Josephine strove to practice what she preached about prayer both in private and in public. One night in the fall of 1887, when George was ill and Josephine thought his life would end soon, she went into the next room and turned to God for solace. She asked him to spare her husband's life for another season of being together. She wrote that God's promises suddenly began to go through her mind, and she soon felt peace return to her soul, responding in the darkness, "Lord, I believe." George's condition improved dramatically overnight, and she celebrated this with thanksgiving, believing his better health to be a miracle.¹¹² Due to her constant battles with sickness, there were many similar instances throughout her life.

In Josephine's mind, prayer played a crucial part in her crusade against the Contagious Diseases Acts. The crusade began with "a series of devotional meetings,"¹¹³ and it soon led to regular prayer meetings held on behalf of the repeal cause.¹¹⁴ Before she appeared in front of the Royal Commission in 1871, she prayed that God would distract the members who favored the Acts and confuse their deliberations in order to strengthen her comments before them.¹¹⁵ After Josephine's appearance, Mr. Peter Rylands, a Commissioner, wrote to a friend about her testimony: "I am not accustomed to religious phraseology, but I cannot give you any idea of the effect produced except by saying that the influence of the Spirit of God was there."¹¹⁶ During the House of Commons debate on the repeal of forced examinations in April 1883, Josephine set up continuous prayer services led by clergy from all denominations,¹¹⁷ and after the repeal passed, she credited their faithful prayers as one of the main reasons God gave them the victory.¹¹⁸

Josephine's habitual devotions of study and prayer spurred her to action. After the Acts were extended to eighteen towns across England in 1869 and it became clear that the government was determined to continue enforcing this "great wickedness," she asked God to give her an eternal hatred of "injustice, tyranny, and cruelty," accompanied by "divine compassion . . . for the love of souls."¹¹⁹ She needed these attributes because she saw her calling as "descend[ing] into the darkness."¹²⁰ Josephine believed that the devil worked against her personally as the leader of the National Association, but she took this as affirmation that she was, indeed, in God's will.¹²¹ This action specifically focused on improving the lives of the most shunned and destitute women in England, the prostitutes.

During Josephine's testimony to the 1871 Royal Commission, a committee member asked her how she viewed the women under

her protection at her House of Rest, and Josephine replied, "As my friends."¹²² In her corner of God's kingdom, the lowly female prostitute was equally valuable to the respected male defender of England.¹²³ Even before they joined the fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts, Josephine and George opened their first House of Rest in 1867, not long after her experience at the Brownlow Hill Workhouse, with thirteen beds available for the

"outcasts."¹²⁴ They refused to discuss the "sinful" pasts of the women, many of them victims of neglect or abuse, and focused on the love of God as the only means of redemption and transformation in their

lives. Both of the Butlers took care of their charges physically, emotionally, and spiritually, looking for opportunities to share the Gospel message.¹²⁵ Their firm belief was that the state could never achieve the goal of changing the behavior of humankind. Only God could do that, thus their united call to turn to Christianity for transformation.¹²⁶

For the Butlers, the Contagious Diseases Acts highlighted the dire need for change in the hearts of all English men and women. Josephine, especially, saw the Acts as the government's capitulation to the sex trade. By regulating prostitution and vice instead of combating them, the state implicitly offered its support.¹²⁷ Most offensive to Josephine and millions of others were the forced examinations of women suspected of prostitution; men received no such treatment. In Josephine's opinion, the Acts represented a sexist double standard emblematic of the lesser status of women in English society. Unable to work outside the home, poor women were forced to turn to prostitution to provide for themselves and their families.¹²⁸ She also opposed the Acts because the regulation system imposed by the legislation "hardened women," denigrating them to a life of prostitution with no hope of improving their status and having the opposite spiritual effect she desired for them: the opening of their hearts to a relationship with God.¹²⁹ For Josephine, "religion and social justice were one," and it is clear that her "feminism and radical politics in general were driven by her Christian faith," specifically the lessons taught by Jesus Christ.¹³⁰

Feminist Christianity

Feminism calls for a "rebalancing between women and men of the social, economic, and political power within a given society, on behalf of both sexes in the name of their common humanity, but with respect for their differences."¹³¹ This perfectly describes Josephine's desire for modern society. She rejected the common belief of "women as 'relative creatures,' who were defined by familial relationships with men," and advocated autonomy for women in both the public and private sphere.¹³² "Josephine as a Christian feminist held that men and women were equals," and this flowed from the spiritual principles she gleaned from her biblical knowledge and prayer experiences.¹³³

As we have already seen, her main source of inspiration and empowerment was the life of Jesus Christ; she believed he called

her to improve the lives of women worldwide by fighting for greater socio-political freedoms. And all of this helps explain the “minefield” of confusion about her religion¹³⁴ because Josephine modeled her life’s work after Christ’s, interpreting his example of ministering directly to women in need and empowering them with equal worth as a direct command to her personally for a life of feminist action. Her Christocentric faith disproves Olive Anderson’s contention about religion playing no major part in the feminist movement. As Josephine wrote in her introduction to *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture*, “I appeal to Christ, and to Him alone” for the foundational truths upon which collective society and individual lives should be built.”¹³⁵ But not all scripture seems to empower women as strongly as Josephine believed, especially several of the Pauline passages in the NT, so how did she reconcile these disparate verses with her Christian feminism?

Josephine repeatedly used scripture to defend her cause, quoting extensively not only from the Gospels, but also from the book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles of Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians. Considering that Ephesians contains the strongest submission passages in the NT, this might seem surprising, but Josephine saw no misogyny or sexism in the words of the Apostle Paul, only liberation. In fact, she loved Paul and related to his suffering on behalf of a higher purpose. “Like Paul before Nero,” Josephine felt God’s power as she testified before Parliament regarding the Acts.¹³⁶ When her letter-writing increased as her aging body became less fit for activity, she told her grandson in 1905 that Saint Paul’s example encouraged her. Just as Paul wrote her favorite NT letters of Ephesians, Philippians, and two to Timothy from prison, so her health imprisoned her to bedrest while she continued her fight for women’s rights, such as repealing the Contagious Diseases Acts in India and supporting women’s suffrage, through letter-writing.¹³⁷ She believed that God made her strong “like Saint Paul” so that she might pursue her crusade, counting it an honor to be used by God just as he used Paul.¹³⁸

Contrary to Helen Mathers’s claim that “Josephine magisterially dismissed St Paul’s claims to be the authority on women’s position in the church,” Josephine also loved Paul because he agreed with Christ’s teachings that women deserved equality.¹³⁹ Both men and women could serve in leadership in the church, so Paul gave instructions for prophetesses on how to behave and clothe themselves.¹⁴⁰ He told husbands and wives to submit to one another in the verses preceding the Ephesians language about submission of women to their husbands, and he wrote to the Galatians that there is neither “male nor female, Jew nor Greek” in God’s kingdom. Josephine argued that Paul’s words built upon a legacy of female empowerment throughout Judeo-Christianity. In the OT, the prophet Joel wrote that both sons and daughters would prophesy, and both servants and handmaidens would receive God’s Spirit. On Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit fell on both men and women, and the Apostle Peter quoted the

Joel passage in his address to the multitude in Jerusalem that saw 3000 people become Christians.¹⁴¹

Problems with the Established Church

For Josephine, “all things were possible” with God, including equality between the sexes and the end of vice in society, but this brings us to an obvious question for her: why the discrepancy in the church and “Christian” society at large between men and women over the centuries?¹⁴² Her letters and journal entries indicate that she would argue the following: the problem was one of application and misunderstanding by the leadership of the church since the fourth century. The church ever since has purposefully glossed over the empowerment verses and subjugated women to a lesser place than what Jesus Christ and the early church intended by taking the submission passages out of context. Paul was referring to marital roles and responsibilities, not a person’s societal status or inherent worth. The overall message of Christ’s teachings and the letters of Paul liberated women from second-class status and empowered them to live in the fullness of life. This perceived failure to implement the purposes of God for women, and society as a whole, by the church leads us into a discussion of the role the church as an institution played in Josephine’s crusade.

Despite being the wife of an Anglican Canon, Josephine infrequently attended Anglican church services. She held “no concept of religious discipline,” at least in the formal sense. She refused to become a member of any church, relying instead on her strong personal connection with God for spiritual guidance.¹⁴³ In fact, she had no desire to hear God’s voice being spoken through other Christians. She wanted to hear his voice personally, and by earnestly seeking him, she often found the instruction she was seeking.¹⁴⁴

Josephine also expressed profound disappointment in the church’s failure to meet the needs of the poor and hurting. During the last six years of her life in Cheltenham, from 1900 to 1906, she lived in a house where a prostitute rented the downstairs room. Josephine longed to share God’s love with this woman, but her sickness prevented her from reaching out. This led her to write to Fanny Forsaith about her anger at “Evangelical Protestants” for not wanting to know about the dark side of their own culture, and by insisting on ignorance, refusing to heed Christ’s call to help the lowest in society. Josephine even described the churches in Cheltenham as being “a nightmare” due to their deadness and hypocrisy.¹⁴⁵

Despite her frustration with the Established Church in England, Josephine still looked to the Christian community to be her biggest supporters, hoping for unity in their opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts. Josephine wrote, “My great hope is from the Christian Churches, setting aside all differences and combining against a moral heresy which threatens the foundation of religion and virtue.”¹⁴⁶ She cultivated her relationships with multiple denominations and movements through her wide

range of friendships with leaders from each of these Christians sects, including Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army and Cardinal Henry Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster.¹⁴⁷ In 1883, Josephine wrote about the characteristics she cherished of each group: the Quakers with their silence and peace; the reverence of the Anglicans, along with their beautiful worship services and liturgy; the passionate prayer and praise songs of the Free Churches; and the Salvation Army's fighting spirit and determination to save the lost.¹⁴⁸ This appreciation formed a "charity . . . broad enough to embrace Catholic, Calvinist, Latitudinarian, Quaker, or Jew as her brother in God. She was completely undogmatic, almost undoctrinal, and her Christian witness was her own life and compassion."¹⁴⁹

Josephine's determination to unify the various threads of English Christianity were ultimately successful. Early on, the Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, United Methodists, and Wesleyans joined her cause. Within a few years, the Baptists and Congregationalists also came on board. The last holdouts were the Scottish Churches and Anglicans.¹⁵⁰ Scottish church leaders were not fond of Josephine; she said they saw her as a "wild mad enthusiast who only did the cause harm," but she persisted in entreating them for support.¹⁵¹ By 1873, the Free Church of Scotland, 700 Wesleyan clergy, and 1500 ministers from the Church of England had all signed petitions for repeal.¹⁵²

For over a decade, Josephine and her National Association allies maintained their fragile coalition. The movement overcame a scare when, after Josephine had set up a committee of leaders to support the National Association's work and continue lobbying Parliament in November 1882, she called for a day of prayer and fasting in 1883, hoping to bring all denominations together in the unity of common prayer. The Unitarians and Anglicans balked at the inclusion of the Quakers and Evangelicals, some even refusing to participate due to the presence of these religious undesirables. This also bothered the committed atheists in her movement.¹⁵³ But despite this opposition, the February event proceeded, and the movement celebrated its first major victory two months later on April 20, 1883, when the bill to repeal the forced examinations of women passed, severely weakening the Acts.¹⁵⁴ They were later fully repealed on April 15, 1886.¹⁵⁵ In typical fashion, Josephine gave God credit for the victory of her great crusade.¹⁵⁶

Evolutionary Christianity: Evangelicalism and the Church

So how shall we describe the Christianity of Josephine Butler? Before an in-depth analysis can occur, we must review the religious context of her age. Throughout her life, we find the ongoing transformation of English Protestantism. The Evangelical movement, led by John Wesley and his fellow Dissenters more than a century before, went through a "metamorphosis" during the 1830s and 1840s as it adapted to the increasingly industrial culture.¹⁵⁷ Wesley's call for a return to the fundamental teachings of Christ, ones Evangelicals believed the eighteenth-century Church of England had largely forgotten, had been accepted by

most Christians.¹⁵⁸ The Evangelical Nonconformists continued to emphasize the conversion experience, while giving greater importance to justification by faith (forgiveness of sins) and "new birth" (renewal from the fallen nature).¹⁵⁹

This "popular religious movement" appealed to the "aspirations" of the working class, so the Anglican Church felt the need to respond.¹⁶⁰ By the late 1830s, it had finally begun to reform itself, recognizing that religion was increasingly "becoming an entirely voluntary act of social behavior."¹⁶¹ A huge shift was occurring, away from the universal church, where everyone attended worship services on Sunday, to the denominational church, where Britons were free to choose which form of Christianity they preferred (if they even chose one at all).¹⁶² Theologically, there were large gulfs between the various denominations, but in daily practice, the local laymen noticed no major differences between Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Josephine grew up during this period, and as the populace began to move away from its Christian faith, she felt the need to call it back to its foundational roots in the teachings of Christ.

Keeping this context in mind, we can see four main characteristics of Josephine's Christian faith, and the first was her mysticism. A Christian mystic receives instruction directly from God and tends to belong to a sect of similar-minded people. Josephine was "not a member of a sect . . . but [she was] undoubtedly a mystic."¹⁶³ Her grandson wrote that her faith "was not a manifestation of a less cynical age; nor did it grow from my grandmother's powerful imagination and exceeding mental strength." Her "gift of faith was extraneous," one of those gifts given to only the "most favoured Christians of any period."¹⁶⁴ As we have already witnessed through her stories of numerous, and often fantastical, religious experiences, she possessed a deep, intimate connection with God, but not with the church; her descriptions of Jesus Christ exemplify this dynamic.¹⁶⁵ Mysticism was unusual for a nineteenth-century Christian, and it probably explains part of the hesitancy by so many historians to discuss the specifics of Josephine's faith.

Because of the mystical nature of her Christianity, Josephine felt no need for any kind of church intermediary to guide her, making her unusual faith even more atypical. Her non-denominationalism was the second main tenet of her belief system, one that is somewhat complicated due to her openness to all sects of Christianity. She was inclusive without making a private commitment to any of them, personally nondenominational while being multi-denominational in her public crusade. This distinction is crucial to understanding how she led the repeal movement while practicing her unique form of Christianity. The disdain she held for the Established Church and its failures prevented her full participation in an organized Christian community, and it drove her to strengthen her individual relationship with the Lord.

The third quality was Josephine's Protestantism. Even though she welcomed Catholics into her cause, she refused to

adhere to the Catholic faith in her personal life because of the blind papal devotion she saw in many of her Catholic friends.¹⁶⁶ She also agreed with the importance to British nationalism of remaining Protestant, but not in the Anglican Church due to her evangelical leanings.

As a Protestant with an “evangelical upbringing,”¹⁶⁷ Josephine believed in the centrality of faith through personal conversion, humble living, and support for social justice. This evangelicalism, which Nancy Boyd failed to address in her discussion of Josephine’s faith, was the final characteristic of Josephine’s Christianity, and its practical application fits within the four-part description of evangelicalism laid out by David Bebbington: “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and . . . crucicentrism, an emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.”¹⁶⁸ Josephine refused to dwell on the pious duties of the religious, which she called “worldly evangelicals.” She drank wine, attended Sunday church infrequently, refused to criticize the faith of her friends, and remained purposefully ambivalent over contemporary theological issues.¹⁶⁹ Later in life, she was surprised to hear that some of her friends thought she was an Anglican because she went to church there. Her response: I went “out of a feeling of loyalty to my husband,” and then she described herself as a Wesleyan who felt “not much sympathy with the Church.”¹⁷⁰ How should Christians behave and live their daily lives? For both Josephine and George, the early Church provided the way because it adhered to the “simplicity of Christ’s teachings.”¹⁷¹

Conclusion

Josephine Butler’s birth between worlds, on the border of Scotland and England, provided a perfect analogy for her life and the complex personal worldview she developed over time.¹⁷² She took up the spiritually evangelical and politically liberal legacy of her parents, building her personal Christian faith and its mystical connection with God upon their foundation. This intimate relationship, centered on the example and teaching of Jesus Christ, birthed her feminism. Through study, prayer, and action, it empowered her with the purpose and confidence necessary to shake off the social taboos of discussing prostitution and speak out about the need for greater women’s rights and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.¹⁷³ The Christian influence of Josephine’s mission proved that she intended to implement “moral and social transformations.”¹⁷⁴ Her feminist Christianity suggested the ideal of a “‘liberated’ humanity” where a “God of justice and compassion” gave his followers “right thought” that led to “right action” in solving the problems of the world, an ideal she desired for all humankind.¹⁷⁵

The Christian-based advocacy Josephine employed further empowered the feminist movement by giving women a greater voice in the public realm.¹⁷⁶ Due to the closed workplace for women and lack of political rights during most of the nineteenth century, religion provided many women with a safe place to make

their voices heard and advocate on behalf of their causes.¹⁷⁷ How should men and women interact in modern society? The Butlers suggested that everyone should look to the teachings of “true Christianity” for guidance; true adherence to Christ’s teachings would restore the equality, balance, and mutual respect necessary for a healthy society.¹⁷⁸

Finally, Josephine enjoyed the complete support of her husband George, who provided love, wise counsel, and a gentle spirit enabling her to lead the repeal movement to victory.¹⁷⁹ Their relationship was a reversal of the Victorian norm: George provided peace and a listening ear at home for his wife without ever losing his masculinity or the respect of his friends.¹⁸⁰ Josephine attributed much of her success to their “mutual dependence.”¹⁸¹

History remembers Josephine Butler as “a great founding mother of modern feminism.”¹⁸² As an evangelical, she believed that God equipped her for her life’s calling through the love and attention of her parents, her husband’s unequivocal support, and the experiences she endured. This direct connection flowed out of her feminist Christianity, one where she claimed agency for her own spiritual well-being and power to transform the world, a world where women enjoyed much greater political influence and social status by the time she went home to be with her God.

Notes

1. Olive Anderson, “Women Preachers in mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change,” in *Historical Journal* 12 (1969): 484.
2. Gail Malmgreen, “Introduction,” in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760–1930*, ed. Gail Malmgreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 6.
3. Malmgreen, “Introduction,” 1, 4.
4. Helen Mathers, “Evangelicalism and Feminism. Josephine Butler, 1828–1906,” in *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750–1900*, ed. Sue Morgan (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 124–25.
5. Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London: John Murray, 2001), 2.
6. Josephine E. Butler, *Josephine Butler: an Autobiographical Memoir*, ed. George and Lucy Johnson (Bristol and London: J. W. Aersmith, 1909), 13.
7. Mathers, “Evangelicalism,” 124–25.
8. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 1.
9. Jordan, *Butler*, 6.
10. Moberly Bell, *Josephine Butler: Flame of Fire* (London: Constable & Company, 1962), 15.
11. Nancy Boyd, *Three Victorian Women Who Changed Their World: Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill, and Florence Nightingale* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 243.
12. Glen Petrie, *A Singular Iniquity: the Campaigns of Josephine Butler* (New York: Viking, 1971), 24.
13. Jordan, *Butler*, 6.
14. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 6.
15. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 7.
16. Jordan, *Butler*, 10–11.
17. Jordan, *Butler*, 13.
18. Jordan, *Butler*, 10–11.
19. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 17.
20. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 8.
21. Jordan, *Butler*, 9.
22. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 5.

23. Jordan, *Butler*, 7–8.
24. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 24.
25. Jordan, *Butler*, 8.
26. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 12.
27. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 8.
28. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 20.
29. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 8–9.
30. Jordan, *Butler*, 159.
31. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 23.
32. Jordan, *Butler*, 16.
33. Jordan, *Butler*, 5.
34. Jordan, *Butler*, 104.
35. Jordan, *Butler*, 115.
36. Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 159.
37. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 15.
38. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 14.
39. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 31.
40. Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, 157.
41. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 15.
42. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 26.
43. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 15.
44. Jordan, *Butler*, 18.
45. Jordan, *Butler*, 19.
46. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 28–29.
47. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 15.
48. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 16.
49. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 155.
50. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 24.
51. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 18.
52. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 23.
53. Jordan, *Butler*, 28.
54. Jordan, *Butler*, 42.
55. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 20.
56. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 19.
57. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 17.
58. Jordan, *Butler*, 25.
59. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 22.
60. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 20.
61. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 25.
62. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 28.
63. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 34.
64. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 39.
65. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 141.
66. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 28.
67. Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 121.
68. Jordan, *Butler*, 251.
69. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 266.
70. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 60.
71. Jordan, *Butler*, 109.
72. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 266.
73. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 54.
74. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 35.
75. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 99.
76. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 39.
77. Jordan, *Butler*, 253.
78. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 30.
79. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 31.
80. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 32.
81. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 33.
82. Jordan, *Butler*, 58.
83. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait of Josephine Butler* (London: Faber & Faber, 1953), 53.
84. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 53.
85. Jordan, *Butler*, 67.
86. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 59–60.
87. Jordan, *Butler*, 68.
88. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 196.
89. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 208.
90. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 47.
91. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 58.
92. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 83.
93. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 112.
94. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 83.
95. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 84.
96. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 85.
97. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 86.
98. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 72.
99. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 85.
100. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 89.
101. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 60.
102. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 45.
103. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 176.
104. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 179.
105. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 63.
106. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 155.
107. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 175.
108. Josephine Butler, *Catharine of Siena: A Biography* (London: Dyer Brothers, 1878), 154–55.
109. Butler, *Catharine of Siena*, 81–82.
110. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 163.
111. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 148.
112. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 186.
113. Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade* (Westport: Hyperion, 1911), 28.
114. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 135.
115. Jordan, *Butler*, 130.
116. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 90.
117. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 163.
118. Jordan, *Butler*, 236–37.
119. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 91.
120. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 88.
121. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 163–64.
122. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 97.
123. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 69.
124. Jordan, *Butler*, 76.
125. Jordan, *Butler*, 72–73.
126. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 94.
127. Butler, *Personal Reminiscences*, 1–4.
128. Jordan, *Butler*, 100.
129. Jordan, *Butler*, 108.
130. Jordan, *Butler*, 3.
131. Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 21.
132. Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 125.
133. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 74.
134. Mathers, “Evangelicalism,” 124.
135. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 68.
136. Jordan, *Butler*, 128.
137. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 216.
138. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 213.
139. Mathers, “Evangelicalism,” 133.

140. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 236.
 141. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 237.
 142. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 242.
 143. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 166.
 144. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 37.
 145. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 210.
 146. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 107.
 147. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 167.
 148. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 170–72.
 149. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 18.
 150. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 58–59.
 151. Jordan, *Butler*, 135.
 152. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 108.
 153. Jordan, *Butler*, 210–11.
 154. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 215.
 155. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 236.
 156. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, 237.
 157. Alan Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London: Longman, 1976), 142.
 158. Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, 71.
 159. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.
 160. Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, 53, 83.
 161. Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, 132–33.
 162. Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, 141.
 163. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 173.
 164. A. S. G. Butler, *Portrait*, 174.
 165. Jordan, *Butler*, 16.
 166. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 164.
 167. Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 115.
 168. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 3.
 169. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 54.
 170. Jordan, *Butler*, 16.
 171. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, 57.
 172. Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, x.
 173. Caine, *Victorian Feminisms*, 180.
 174. Caine, *Victorian Feminisms*, 152.
 175. Boyd, *Three Victorian Women*, xiv–xv.
 176. Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), 141.
 177. Malmgreen, “Introduction,” 7.
 178. Caine, *Victorian Feminisms*, 180.
 179. Jordan, *Butler*, 255.
 180. Petrie, *Singular Iniquity*, 153.
 181. Bell, *Flame of Fire*, 195.
 182. Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 295.



ASA JAMES SWAN serves as Chief of Staff for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. He is pursuing a PhD in Modern European History at the University of Kentucky. Asa is from Campbellsville, Kentucky, and is married to Allison Joy Ball, the state Treasurer of Kentucky.

CBE Membership

Join our community of members!
 Becoming a member supports and sustains CBE and helps us equip you with resources on biblical gender equality.

As a member you receive:

- A subscription to our award-winning, quarterly publications, *Mutuality* and *Priscilla Papers*
- Discounts at CBE Bookstore
- Discounts on registration to our conferences
- Access to member-exclusive sales and content on our website

For more information, visit cbe.today/members



CBE International