

The Hon. and Rt. Revd John Butler (1717 – 1782)

Rector of St Marylebone (1788)

Butler was born at Hamburg.

As a young man he was a tutor in the family of Mr Child, a banker. He was not a member of either Cambridge or Oxford University, but in later life he received the degree of LL.D. from Cambridge.

He married for his first wife a lady who kept a school at Westminster; his second was the sister and co-heiress of Sir Charles Vernon, of Farnham in Surrey, and this marriage improved his social standing.

Having taken orders he became a popular preacher in London, and in 1754 he published a sermon, preached at St Paul's Cathedral before the Sons of the Clergy. In the title-page, he is described as chaplain to the Princess Dowager of Wales. In the same year, he also published a sermon preached before the trustees of the Public Infirmary.

In the title-page of a sermon preached before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on the occasion of a general fast in 1758, he is described as minister of Great Yarmouth and chaplain to the Princess Dowager.

He was installed as a Prebendary of Winchester in 1760.

Despite of this relationship to the princess's household, in 1762 he issued a political pamphlet addressed to the 'Cocoa Tree' (the Cocoa-Tree Club was associated with the Tories) and signed 'A Whig.' In this pamphlet, which ran to three editions, he bitterly attacked John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute and the conduct of his ministry since the accession of George III.

He was appointed chaplain to Thomas Hayter (Bishop of Norwich 1749–1761), received the living of Everley, Wiltshire, and on the recommendation of Arthur Onslow was made one of the king's chaplains.

In 1769 he was made Archdeacon of Surrey.

During the American War of Independence he issued a number of political pamphlets, under the signature of 'Vindex,' in which he strongly supports the policy of Lord North.

In 1777, he was appointed Bishop of Oxford, being ordained and consecrated at Lambeth on 25 May.

Butler had now adopted strong Tory principles, and on 30 January 1787 preached before the House of Lords about the death of Charles I. While bishop of Oxford he helped Carl Gottfried Woide to transcribe the Codex Alexandrinus.

In 1788, he was translated to the bishopric of Hereford. He died in 1802, in his eighty-fifth year, leaving no children.

In 1786, a great fire burnt down the old medieval west end of the cathedral nave. John Butler was responsible for a fore-shortened modern construction. He also installed a private chapel for the bishop's entourage in the palace, which is adjoined by the cloisters to the cathedral.

His published works are:

- *An Answer to the Cocoa Tree, by a Whig*, 1762
- *A Consultation on the Subject of a Standing Army*, 1763
- *Serious Consideration on the Character of the Present Administration*.
- *Account of the Character of the Rt. Hon. H. B. Legge*
- Sermons and charges of various dates, republished in a collective edition, 1801