

From the London Tablet.  
THE REV. DR. FLETCHER ON  
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

This is a work\* to which the attention of all ought to be directed, whether clergy or laity. The signs of the times demand it; the subject itself demands it; and last, though not least, the very name of its learned and venerable author, demands it; for the name of Dr. Fletcher is a guarantee for the production being what it professes to be. It is certainly a compendium, but a compendium, systematic in its arrangement, comprehensive in its contents (it embraces the whole of the subject,) and lucid and logical throughout. There is but one desideratum, and that is a want of reference to the various documents and authorities, which are copiously adduced in its pages. We regret that the Dr. has not given us chapter and verse for his quotations; not that we question for one moment the accuracy and research of the author, but because nothing but the thing in black and white (and hardly that) is capable of meeting the critical and sceptical age in which we live. The Anglican Church has had countless volumes written in its favour, and many in its disfavour; it has had its eulogists, its critics, and its canvassers; and it promises to exhaust as much of pen, ink, and letter-press as ever; for from the days when Luther "bellowed in bad Latin," as Hallam happily expresses it, and boasted that he stood alone (*solus eram*) to the present moment, when the disciples of Pusey and Newman are breathing forth their quasi-yearning for a junction with Rome in their "Tracts for the Times," and through their organs the *British Critic* and the *English Churchman*, never was there, it would seem, such a troubling of the religious waters, such animosities, such hopes and fears, as to the two antagonistic systems, viz: that of Rome, and that of the Thirty-nine Articles. In the forthcoming struggle it behoves each one to buckle on his armour afresh, and hold himself in readiness for the contest; it behoves the advocates of time-honoured Rome to examine again the substractions of the modern Anglican Establishment; for if religion is one, if Peter be the rock, and Rome the centre of unity; if salvation be of her as it was of the Jews, then separatists from her are certainly schismatics, and we may assuredly moot the question, whether a religion merely of yesterday is to be a religion of to-morrow. In this contest on the one hand, we must insist, in spite of centuries of calumnies, on the stability of the Catholic Church; a stability as certain and immovable as the rock on which she is founded; and on the other, we must urge the instability, the sandy foundation of the Anglican Establishment. To dissipate the visionary and lingering notions of those who manifest a longing for a union with Rome, we most boldly inform them that between truth and error there can be no compromise, no resting place; there must be the confession of the one and the abjuration of the other.

\* "A short Historical View of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Anglican Church."

To become acquainted with the real history of the Anglican Church, may be deemed by some, no easy achievement; but let them peruse with only common attention the *multum in parvo* production of Dr. Fletcher, and from the very clear, able, and chronological way, in which he has anatomised the subject, they may make themselves masters of the question, at a comparatively trifling cost. As to extracts, we must confine ourselves to one, on the all engrossing topic of the day, viz. the Oxford movement towards the City of the seven Hills. We select this, because it conveys, in our judgment, a safe and sound view of what has been facetiously termed by some, the *new mania*, and by others has been enthusiastically pronounced the first step to the re-conversion of England. Before we give our readers the extract on Puseyism, from the concluding chapter of the Doctor's work, we would just inform them that the work consists of twelve chapters. The first treats of the origin &c. of the Anglican Church, under Henry VII; second, of its progress under Edward VI; third, of its interruption under Mary; fourth, of the progress of the new hierarchy under Elizabeth; fifth, of Parker's Consecration; sixth, seventh, and eighth, of its continued progress under Elizabeth; ninth, of the effects produced by the Establishment of the Anglican Church; tenth, treats of the schismatical character of the said Church; eleventh, an excellent chapter on the name "Anglo-Catholic," and the twelfth, the most opportune and useful perhaps of all, presents us with some judicious remarks on the proposed union of the Oxford movement, which is now impregnating with its spirit the adherents of the Anglican Establishment, in whatever quarter of the globe they are found. Now for our extract from the concluding chapter.

"It is often asked, and this more generally by the Protestants than by the Catholics, why the learned writers, (the Puseyites,) considering their affection for the Catholic Church, and their slender respect for their own—why they do not at once give up the latter, and embrace the Catholic? These are questions which themselves alone can answer. Their conduct is, certainly, a subject of surprise to the public; and a mystery which no one can explain. It is on account of the incoherency of their language—alternately praising and abusing the Catholic Church; to-day, studying to promote the union; to-morrow labouring to counteract it;—that they are so severely treated by the writers and members of their own establishment, accusing them of duplicity, and imputing to them motives alike dishonourable and ungenerous. Very different from all this is my opinion of them. I consider them as persons even more estimable for their virtues than they are remarkable for their learning and their talents. At the same time, I do think this:—that there is an incoherency in their writings, a waywardness in their conduct, for which it is impossible to account. Thus the reader has just seen, with what love and fervour they speak of the Church of

Rome. And yet it is true, that there are not a set of men, not even the mountebanks and heroes of Exeter Hall, that have abused the Church of Rome, more insolently than they have done. I could cite, but out of respect for their characters I will not, I could cite endless extracts from their works to show this. This, then certainly is true, that if the learned writers do really wish, as they profess they do, for a reconciliation with the Parent Church, their plan, or method of bringing this about is, of all others, the most singular.

"With regard to the proposed and wished-for union, there is, of course, nothing that the Catholic more ardently and more anxiously longs for. Its blessings to religion, and its benefits to the kingdom, would be infinite. So, for example, we have just seen, exhibited by the benevolent Lord Ashley, of spectacle of the moral state of this kingdom—a spectacle of vice, ignorance, and depravity, such as disgraces no other Christian nation. Even Sir James Graham, although the staunch defender of his Church, admitted, on the occasion of his lordship's motion, that "It may be safely asserted that the important subject of religious education has been neglected in this country in a greater degree than in any other civilized nation." This fact, or concession, accounts at once for the evils depicted by his lordship. For without religious instruction it is vain to expect either virtue or good morals. Well, but what, then, is the remedy? The remedy is obvious.—Recal and re-establish these means by which, in ancient days, the aforesaid evils were prevented. Recal *Catholicity*, and she will bring back with her those same principles and practices which long rendered England the model of Christian nations. She will speedily rebuild those mounds and restore those fences which answered the twofold purpose of stemming the tide of vice and of sheltering the exercise of virtue. We shall then no longer hear or read, as we now do incessantly, of that countless number of disgusting crimes which disgrace the nation, much less of those constant tragedies which every day afflict it; men seeking for consolation in the horrors of self destruction. (Suicide is a completely Protestant crime, unheard of and unnoticed in the annals of this country before the Reformation.) Then, too, instead of those numberless sects and that religious anarchy which divide and distract the kingdom, we should form one family harmoniously united in one faith, and one order of worship.

"And neither would these be the only blessings that would result from the happy reconciliation. Then those immense revenues of the church, which are now devoted to the enrichment of the present body of the clergy, with their wives, children, families, and so on, would be, in great part, consecrated, as anciently, to the relief of the poor, and the comfort of the distressed. (It is, again, to Protestantism that we owe the oppression of poor rates, and the grievances of poor laws.) Catholicity restored, we shall soon again behold, rising up from their ruins and

adorning the landscape, those sanctified asylums, where innocence, far purer than vestal, was wont to bloom, and where virtue was prepared for heaven; those magnificent abodes where benevolence and generosity used to dwell in every possible shape of tenderness and charity; where the poor found relief; the sick met with care; the traveller, at home; the broken-hearted, comfort. Then we should see restored to their ancient splendour, those now neglected monuments of ancient piety, the few churches which the barbarism of the Reformers has not destroyed, but which, even in their present shamefully neglected state, are still the noblest monuments that adorn the nation. These would early be re-established in their former beauty; and in them, instead of the dull, cold service which they now witness, we should again behold offered up, amid hosannas of joy and gladness, that divine sacrifice of love, which is the soul of devotion and the essence of Christian worship. In short, only renew the blessed alliance, and soon a new order of things will reign. The present wilderness will become an Eden, smiling in flowers, and rich in fruits; and England be once more what it was in its olden days, *Britannia Sancta*.

"Ecco venturo lætatur omni sæculo."

"But, alas! I feel it; I feel that I have been describing but the visions of a pleasing dream. The obstacles which oppose the blessed union are numberless, as they are powerful. The dark, blind, ignorance of our religion, which pervades every rank and order of society in this country, not excepting its clergy—their hostility, rancour, and inveterate prejudices against it, all deeply burnt into the public mind by the bigotry of the pulpit and the injustice of the press—these are obstacles to the compact which nothing short of the Divine interference can remove. Then comes the stern and united opposition of the entire Dissenting sects. To all these the renewal of the reconciliation would be deemed ruinous. It would spoil their trade and deprive their ministers of the main source of their livelihood; for it is by the promotion of disunion that they live. But abstracting even from these considerations the spirit and temper of the times, the general indifference to all religion, the prevalence of incredulity—above all, in the higher and more literary circles the rage for pleasure and dissipation, and the almost universal reign of vice, are themselves circumstances which defeat every well founded hope of an approaching return to Catholicity."

We have not even attempted to do justice to Dr. Fletcher's little work; the best justice that can be done it, and ourselves, is to procure it and make its contents our own. It will amply repay a careful perusal. In parting with the learned Doctor and his excellent production, we would urge him, on its reaching a second edition, to supply the reference to the authors quoted in his pages.

Reader! art thou in prosperity? be grateful to Him from whom all earthly good proceeds. Art thou in adversity? remember that He who rules the thunder, is all-powerful to cast from thee the bitter cup.