



John Fletcher

Biographical Sketch

Sept 12, 1729 —Aug 14, 1785

The following testimonies to the Character of John Fletcher are taken from the excellent Book ‘Letters of John Fletcher’ Selected and Edited by Edward Cook

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism said this of John Fletcher:

“I was intimately acquainted with him for above thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles; and in all that time I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action.... Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years, but one equal to him I have not known—one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblameable a character in every respect I have found either in Europe or America, and I scarce expect to find another such on this side of eternity.”

In Wesley's short biography of Mr. Fletcher we find these words:

“In general it is easy to perceive that a more excellent man has not appeared in the Church for some ages. It is true, in several ages, and in several countries, many men have excelled in particular virtues and graces. But who can point out, in any age or nation, one that so highly excelled in all—one that was enabled in so large a measure to ‘put on the whole armor of God?’ yea, to ‘put on Christ,’ as to ‘perfect holiness in the fear of God?’”

It is no secret that John Fletcher was, in the words of Luke Tyerman, “Wesley's designated successor” as leader of the Methodists. As it happened, Wesley outlived him by six years!

James Ireland, an intimate friend and regular correspondent of Mr. Fletcher,

paid the following tribute:

‘I never saw Fletcher's equal. On him great grace was bestowed. What deadness to the world! What spiritual mindedness! What zeal for souls! What communion with God! What intercourse with Heaven! What humility at the feet of Jesus! What moderation towards all men! What love to the poor! In short, he possessed the mind which was in Christ Jesus.’

The Rev. Mr. Gilpin, a close friend and associate of Mr. Fletcher, and one of his biographers, wrote of him:

‘He outran the most zealous of his companions. He overtook many who were steadily persevering in the path of life, and appeared at the head of those who were pressing after the highest attainable state of sanctity and grace. From the commencement to the conclusion of his pilgrimage, there was never once perceived in him the least imaginable tendency to a loitering or lukewarm disposition. If he was not every moment actually upon the stretch after spiritual improvement, he was observed, at least, with ‘his loins girded, his shoes on his feet, and his staff in his hand.’ The fervor of his spirit was a silent but sharp reproof to the negligent and the unfaithful.’

Even those who held very different theological views from Mr. Fletcher could not help admitting that he was possessed of an extraordinary degree of piety. The Rev. Henry Venn, who strongly differed with him on several points of doctrine, yet had this to say about his godly character:

‘He was a luminary; a *luminary* did I say? He was a *sun*. I have known all the great men for these fifty years: but I have known none like him. I was intimately acquainted with him, and was under the same roof with him once for six weeks, during which time I never heard him say a single word which was not proper to be spoken, and which had not a tendency to ‘minister grace to the hearers.’

To these various testimonies regarding Mr. Fletcher's godly character we add a few words from one who was more intimate than any—his wife Mary: ‘Never did I behold anyone more dead to the things of the world. His treasure was above; and so was his heart also.’

The Eclectic Review, 1805 said of John Fletcher:

‘There have been some, in most ages of Christianity and in most countries where it is professed, who have emulated its primitive and genuine excellence. Among these exalted few, the subject of the biography before us [*The life of the Rev. John W. De La*

Fletcher, by Joseph Benson.] is unquestionably to be ranked. In whatever period he had lived, to whatever department of Christians he had belonged, he would have shone in the hemisphere as a star of the first magnitude."

From the Introduction of "Letters of John Fletcher, Selected and Edited by Edward Cook"
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The writings of John Fletcher are contained in "The Works of John Fletcher" a Four Volume 2,465 page Set. They may be purchased on CD-ROM for use with Windows 95/98 from the following source: [Wesleyan Heritage Publishers](#).