
From a Village Pulpit

Fisher George Whitefield

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FROM A VILLAGE PULPIT



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BY THE
REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD FISHER



NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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Received 12-17-20 11:17 A.M.
 Since 12-17-20
 4-12-21
 01-26-22 J.M. g

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THE REASON FOR THIS BOOK

GEORGE WHITEFIELD FISHER was born on Christmas Day in the year 1831. His Christian ministry lasted nearly twenty years, and was divided among three parishes: Saugerties on the Hudson; Peace Dale, Rhode Island (where he remained twelve years); and Cameron, Missouri, where, after a ministry of only a year, his health failed. He returned East in the hope of recovery; but, after a brief illness, his life in this world was finished, July 12, 1884.

His body was laid to rest in Peace Dale.

These few messages, gathered from his ministry, have been compiled for his children and grandchildren, that they may have with them always a clear view of the earnest, consecrated spirit which prompted and pervaded his life-work. Many of his parishioners, too, who are now alive and hold him in grateful remembrance, will be glad to have a memento of his enlightened and broad ministry—a ministry, exalted and poetic, yet keeping his people in touch with the live issues and growing knowledge of the times, and holding them, as well, to the homely virtues and obligations of our daily life.

His own was a Christian and a manly life—true and gentle, but also courageous and full of purpose and activity; and, in its daily walk, exemplifying

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the lessons he taught and the motives and aspirations he sought to inspire. When the supreme moment came, the hope he had preached to others did not fail him.

Those who knew him loved him, and now cherish his memory with reverence.

A little of all this (for not all of a sweet and brave life can write itself down) is revealed in these sermons. Wherever they chance to come, may they awaken a sense of the beauty of holiness, and create the desire to be taught of Christ and to live the Christ-life.

ELLA WESCOTT FISHER.

I

A HANDFUL OF CORN

"There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains,—the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon."—PSALM lxxii. 16.

IN the text, under the figure of a handful of seed-corn planted upon sunny uplands, resulting in an extensive and an abounding harvest, waving like a forest, the poetic imagination may depict the small beginnings in the planting of Christianity and the large results to be gathered from it.

Christ came into the world, the child of poverty and obscurity. His early life was passed,—the period of His preparation,—in a despised backwoods village in a remote mountain valley among the lower and outlying ridges of the Lebanon range, to which reference is made in the text. When he began His work it must needs be among the humbler classes, and the outcast and the criminal. His first chosen helpers were, from a similar necessity, rough and unlettered fishermen. The very nation to which He belonged had earned the ill-will of the neighbouring peoples, and were excluded from the sympathies of the whole Gentile world. Thus against every worldly prejudice, and with every earthly disadvantage, Christianity began that career of rapid triumph,

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of permanent conquest, and steady extension which is the living miracle of history. It gained Jew and Greek and Roman, from remote province and central capital, in the peasant's hovel and Cæsar's household. And when the great empire went to pieces the spiritual kingdom survived the general wreck,—and Christ's image and superscription were fixed where Cæsar's were effaced! Well wrote Pilate, in unconscious prophecy, and placed it over the crucified: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," and wrote it "in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin,"—for His royal authority was soon to be recognized by all these dominant races, and their three languages were to be employed in proclaiming the Gospel. It could use them all. It had truth that, properly to express it, required alike the rigid Hebrew, with its sacred vocabulary; the flexible Greek, with its familiarity with philosophy, and the sonorous Latin, with its adaptation to eloquence. And when these languages were dead,—relegated to preserve unchanged a completed revelation,—the living tongues that took their place had learned to voice the truth of God, to praise the Name of Christ, to tell the story of the Cross. And thus the fragments into which the Roman Empire was broken, and the barbarian races that helped to break it, destined to form states anew, received the Christian leaven as an element of their life, and have transmitted it unimpaired in its power and the increasing purity of the truth, to the nations of the present day. An American, as one