

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES FITCH.

Next in our first of ministers, that became closely associated with the Millerite movement is Charles Fitch who lived from 1805--October 14, 1844. He was born in Hampton, Connecticut. After graduating from Brown University, Fitch was ordained to the Congregational ministry and served at Abington, Connecticut, Warren, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut, successively. In 1836 he went to the Marlboro Congregational Chapel in Boston, and later to Newark, New Jersey, and Haverhill, Massachusetts. Fitch's greatest contribution was made at Cleveland, Ohio, after he became the western proponent of the advent message. His other interests included his membership in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. p. 1, Para. 1, [BIOG].

He was a strong opponent to slavery as revealed by a pamphlet he produced entitled, *Slaveholding Weighed in the Balance of Truth, and Its Comparative Guilt Illustrated*. In it he stated, "Every man has a tongue, and he can use it; he has influence, and he can exert it; he has moral power, and he can put it forth. Up my friends and do your duty, to deliver the spoils out of the hands of the oppressor, lest the fire of God's fury kindle ere long upon you." *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 534. p. 1, Para. 2, [BIOG].

In 1838, while he was pastor of the Marlboro Street Congregational Church in Boston, he was given a copy of Miller's *Lectures*, containing his views on the Second Advent. Fitch wrote to Miller, in March, confessing his "overwhelming interest such as I never felt in any other book except the Bible." *Ibid*. After carefully studying the book and comparing the message with Scripture, Fitch stated that he came to believe in the correctness of Miller's views. On March 4 he preached two sermons on the Second Advent, creating a deep interest among his hearers. He proposed to present the whole subject of the Second Advent to a meeting of the Ministerial Association on March 6. He secured a dozen copies of Miller's *Lectures* for distribution stating, "I trust that I may thereby do something to spread the truth." *Ibid*. p. 1, Para. 3, [BIOG].

The Association's reaction was so negative and accompanied with so much searing ridicule and contempt that Fitch lost

confidence in the advent message and he lapsed into his former views of the world's conversion. p. 1, Para. 4, [BIOG].

But his mind could not rest. He thirsted for truth and longed for holiness of life. While serving as pastor of the Free Presbyterian Church of Newark, New Jersey, in 1839, he wrote his Views of Sanctification. This was his statement of faith and he stressed sanctification by divine grace through Scripture. This prompted the appointment of a committee by the presbytery to counsel Fitch on his views on perfection. This meeting resulted in the passage of a Resolution of Censure, declaring his views to be a dangerous error and asking him to preach his views no more. Fitch replied in a Letter to the Newark Presbytery in 1840, wherein he defended his views. He stated that ... I cannot regard your admonition,' and offered his reasons." Ibid. p. 1, Para. 5, [BIOG].

"After years of unsatisfactory living, he had found, personally and experimentally, the enabling grace of Christ. He had learned the secret of reckoning himself dead to sin. The world had lost its charm, and his heart was filled with joy. He had entered into a new life -- and supported his position with an imposing array of texts. He took this stand, he adds, 'in view of an approaching judgement.' Then he avers, 'if you still adhere to that opinion, I must consider myself as no longer of your number.' The presbytery must do to him as they think our Lord requires. This he soon followed with his Reasons for Withdrawing From the Newark Presbytery, the title page adding, 'By Charles Fitch, Pastor of the Free Presbyterian Church, Newark.' The Preface states that he felt called to preach the 'blessed doctrine of sanctification by faith in Christ.' He recognized that if he did not withdraw he would be excommunicated. So he states, 'I do hereby withdraw from you.' Thus he bade adieu to his Presbyterian brethren." Ibid. p. 2, Para. 1, [BIOG].

When Fitch explained his perplexities to Litch the latter said, "What you need is the doctrine of the second advent to put with the doctrine of holiness." Fitch again studied Miller's teachings comparing them with the Bible while studying all other available writings on the subject of the Second Advent. After pursuing this course of study for a time and reviewing the Lord's leading since leaving Brown University, he brought all this before the Lord in fasting

and prayer. He stated: p. 2, Para. 2, [BIOG].

"When Dear Bro. Litch named the second advent, I went to the Lord; I read my Bible, and all the works that I could obtain. I possessed myself of all the evidences in the case that I could; and then with fasting and prayer I laid them and myself with my all before the Lord, desiring only that the Blessed Spirit might guide me into all truth. I felt that I had no will of my own, and wished only to know the will of my Saviour. Light seemed breaking in upon my mind, ray after ray, and I found myself more and more unable to resist the conviction that it was indeed the truth, that the coming of the blessed Saviour was at the DOOR." Ibid., 537. p. 2, Para. 3, [BIOG].

Having made his decision, Fitch threw all his energies into the proclamation of the advent message. He now found doors opening wide on every hand as he joined Miller, Litch and soon Himes, along with a steadily growing number of Adventist preachers. p. 2, Para. 4, [BIOG].

"And now so soon as I was ready to come out on the Second Advent, the door before me was thrown wide open, and I have been wholly unable for the last 8 months to meet one half the calls which I have received. Wherever I have been God has been with me. Since the first of Dec. last, I have preached as often as every day and about sixty times besides. I have been in all the New England States, congregations have been large in all places. Wherever I have been I have preached holiness. My usual practice has been to preach on Holiness in the afternoon, and on the Second Advent in the evening. I have seen saints sanctified and sinners led to Christ." Ibid. p. 2, Para. 5, [BIOG].

While some rejected the message and turned against Fitch, many others accepted the advent truth. Among them were Dr. and Mrs. W. C. Palmer that wrote many advent hymns, including, Watch Ye Saints, number 549 in the old Church Hymnal. p. 2, Para. 6, [BIOG].

One of Fitch's most notable productions, at least as far as Seventh-day Adventists are concerned, was his famous "1843 prophetic chart (1842) with the able assistance of Apollos Hale, who usually attended Fitch's church. Fitch presented his chart to the Boston General Conference in May, chaired by Joseph Bates. Plans were laid to proclaim the "Midnight Cry" more vigorously. Three hundred copies

were authorized for use by the Adventist preachers. p. 3, Para. 1, [BIOG].

Fitch received more calls to preach than he could fill. Wherever he spoke, large crowds gathered to hear him. The following is his own description of a typical speaking trip: "I reached this place (Montpelier) at about half past twelve o'clock on Wednesday. I had then preached thirteen times in a week, and attended many prayer meetings and then at the end of it instead of taking rest I had had a most fatiguing ride of 75 miles. A meeting however was appointed for me here on the evening of my arrival. Accordingly I went to bed, and after sleeping two hours and a half, I arose exceedingly refreshed, and preached in the evening. The audience was tolerable for numbers -- though by no means such as I had left at Claremont. Yesterday I preached twice, and the audience in the evening was much increased. The spirit of the Lord was present, and truth had power." Ibid., 540. p. 3, Para. 2, [BIOG].

Toward the end of 1842, Fitch carried the advent message to Cleveland, Ohio, and to Oberlin College near Cleveland. He reveals how the faculty reacted to his messages: "I have never seen the glorious truths of the Bible, teaching the kingdom and coming of Christ, met with more determined opposition, contempt and scorn, than they have been by the Oberlin Faculty; and never, in all my life have I felt such anguish at my heart's core, or shed such bitter, burning tears as I have at their rejection Of the Word of the Lord." Ibid., 541. p. 3, Para. 3, [BIOG].

In the spring of 1843, Fitch preached a sermon entitled, "Come Out of Her My People." He "contended that Babylon was no longer limited to the Roman Catholic Church, as held back in Protestant Reformation days, but now included also the great body of Protestant Christendom. He maintained that, by their rejection of the light of the advent, both branches of Christendom had fallen from the high estate of pure Christianity. Protestantism was either cold to the doctrine of the second advent or had spiritualized it away." Ibid., 544. p. 3, Para. 4, [BIOG].

"But Fitch did not have much longer to live and labor. He was in Buffalo, New York, in October, 1844, when a large number of new believers requested baptism. Others had not yet fully made up their minds. Arrangements were made, and the company who were ready went with him to the lake shore

and were baptized in the chilly autumn water. A cold wind was blowing as Fitch started for home in his wet garments - - for they had no protective baptismal robes or waterproof waders in those days. But just then he was met by another company of tardy candidates, on their way to the lake, who similarly desired baptism. So, cold as he was, Fitch went back with them and immersed them. And then came a belated third company who had at last made their decision. At their request he turned back a second time, and baptized them also. But Fitch was seriously chilled. p. 4, Para. 1, [BIOG].

"Ill as he was from the effects of this prolonged exposure, he nevertheless rode several miles the next day in the cold wind to meet another appointment. This proved too much for him and he was stricken down with fatal illness which speedily brought on his death at the early age of thirty-nine. His last triumphant words on October 14, shortly before the day of expectation, were, 'I believe in the promises of God.' p. 4, Para. 2, [BIOG].

It may confidently be said that none of the Adventist preachers were more widely loved than Charles Fitch. Courageous and resourceful, helpful and hopeful, he interpreted the love of God in word and deed, in the light of the second advent, to the thousands to whom he ministered." Ibid., 545. p. 4, Para. 3, [BIOG].

A LETTER. p. 4, Para. 4, [BIOG].

By Charles Fitch From Midnight Cry, December 21, 1843
Cleveland, Ohio, December 5th, 1843. p. 4, Para. 5,
[BIOG].

Dear Brother Himes: This day I have laid in the grave my dear Willie, a little boy that would have been seven years of age the 15th of the present month. I need not tell you that my heart 'aches, and I cannot tell you how much. Some ten months ago, he took an inflammatory rheumatism which left him with an organic disease of the heart. He was comfortable through the summer, and went east with us. He kept up and about until the last of October. While I was absent at that time, he was prostrated. On my return the physicians said there was no hope of his recovery. Oh, how my heart was pained at the prospects of seeing his life wrung out of him with anguish, and of then following him away to the cold grave! p. 4, Para. 6, [BIOG].

I stood and watched by his side three weeks, held him in my arms to relieve his distress, and sung to him at his oft repeated request the second advent hymns to beguile his tedious hours. "Sing to me, Pa, 99 was his repeated request every hour. What shall I sing, my dear? Sing, How Long O Lord Our Saviour, and again, sing, Lo, What a Glorious Sight Appears, sing, My Faith Looks Up to Thee. After three weeks, I thought he might live for weeks to come, and, feeling it to be duty, I tore myself away from his side with an aching heart, and I went last Monday week to Huron County to preach the kingdom of the Lord. On Sabbath morning last, being in Fairfield, more than 60 miles from home, I was awakened from my pillow by a messenger who said, "Your child is dead." I hastened home, and we have just laid him in his lowly bed. It has been painful, painful, but the Lord sustains us, and we have hope in his death. p. 4, Para. 7, [BIOG].

When he was three years of age, I was accustomed to relate to him in language suited to his capacity the interesting incidents in the life of our Savior for the purpose of teaching him to know and love the character of Christ. He became exceedingly interested, and would often climb upon my knee and say, "Now, Pa, tell me something about the blessed Savior." At length he arose from his bed one morning very early, and came to me calling my name repeatedly to get my attention as I was conversing. He said, "The blessed Savior is my Savior." This was said by him when there had been nothing at that time to turn his attention to the subject. Sweeter accents than those never fell upon my ear. Never from that moment did his faith in Jesus waiver. When told by a sister some years older than himself, "You will never live to be a man. The Savior is coming soon, and the world will be burned," he replied, "I don't care, the Savior will take care of me." . Once when he saw me greatly disquieted at some perplexing circumstances which came suddenly upon me, and at which I ought not to have been moved, he said in his usual calm and deliberate manner, "The Savior will come pretty soon, and then we shan't have any more trouble." p. 5, Para. 1, [BIOG].

In his sickness, he manifested the most perfect resignation. During all the time I was with him, he never expressed a desire to get well, or to be relieved from suffering. At one time when I had expressed such a desire,

he replied, "The Savior can make me well if He wants me well." He had his senses till the last, knew perfectly well he was dying, composed himself, closed his own eyes, and died with as much calmness as he would have gone in health to his pillow for a night's repose. p. 5, Para. 2, [BIOG].

He was not without the follies and faults of childhood, but we do believe he lived and died with confidence in Christ, and we cannot doubt that the blessed Savior is indeed Willie's Savior. p. 6, Para. 1, [BIOG].

Perhaps I should apologize for occupying you with so much that has no particular interest for any but ourselves, but when our bosoms are heaving with sighs we cannot suppress, and our eyes are gushing with tears which will flow, we love to lay open our whole hearts to those we know have hearts to feel. I must not neglect to say that we have had friends through all our afflictions that have been friends indeed. Charles Fitch. p. 6, Para. 2, [BIOG].

EW.017.001 "Here we saw the tree of life and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again, and saw that they were united at the top in one tree. So it was the tree of life on either side of the river of life. Its branches bowed to the place where we stood, and the fruit was glorious; it looked like gold mixed with silver. p. 6, Para. 3, [BIOG].

EW.017.002 We all went under the tree and sat down to look at the glory of the place, when Brethren Fitch and Stockman, who had preached the gospel of the kingdom, and whom God had laid in the grave to save them, came up to us and asked us what we had passed through while they were sleeping. We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that surrounded us that we could not speak them out, and we all cried out, "Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!" and we touched our glorious harps and made heaven's arches ring." p. 6, Para. 4, [BIOG].