



## St. John Fisher

*Vincent McNabb*

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"DEAR reader! you are about to take part in perhaps the greatest tragedy of an age that wrote Hamlet and Macbeth. Greater even than the writer's part will be yours, the reader's and hearer's part. Only your hearing ear and your seeing eye will bring the tragedy to its own. But your seeing eye and hearing ear must first recognise that a greater than Hamlet or Macbeth is here. They are but splendid fiction. But the tragedy of the first and only Cardinal to receive the martyr's crown is as real as the Yorkshire moors where John Fisher was born, or as Tower Hill where the Cardinal Bishop of Rochester was beheaded. Do not expect anything melodramatic or

miraculous in this tragedy of tragedies: all on the hero's side is as sober in colouring as the heather on a Yorkshire moor. All is as normal as the steadiness of the hills or the falling of flakes of snow.

Search as you may in the plain tale of this Yorkshireman who was spokesman of England's faith and chivalry, you will find no gesture, no stir, no noise, but only a humble self-distrusting quest of the best. But, dear reader, in this outwardly emotionless love of God and men to see a tragedy beyond all telling or seeing will call from you the best of your mind and heart."

From the Introduction

Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., a prolific Dominican known for his humility and preaching, takes advantage of the historical research of his contemporaries to weave the drama of St. John Fisher's amazing life.

This is a short work, rather than a detailed historical analysis, that is both endlessly enjoyable as literature—even a work of art, yet at the same time pious and inspiring to faith. McNabb's life of Fisher traces the saint's early days from his childhood to his enrollment in Cambridge, his becoming a priest, a chaplain to Lady Margaret Beaufort, and at last, being appointed Bishop of Rochester, in which office he would be cruelly put to death by Henry VIII, the exemplar of tyrants.

Fisher is an important study for us today, not only because he died for the Catholic Faith, but also because he died for not believing as the monarch would have him believe. Henry VIII, in his quest to divorce his wife to marry his mistress, created the model of the Totalitarian state. Fisher is for us, a witness both of solid adherence to faith, as well as the courage to speak out when most others are content to get along.

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