

## EPWORTH LEAGUE TOPICS

### Epoch Makers in Church History

#### IX. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox

##### Fathers of the Reformation

THIRD MEETING IN JANUARY.

Rom. 9: 14-33.

FREDERICK E. MALOTT

Naturally, the first name that occurs to one when the Protestant Reformation is mentioned is that of Martin Luther. It was he who struck the first decisive blow at Romish errors and papal presumption. But he was not the only champion of the great Reform Movement. Other men, in other lands, helped to determine both its character and its progress. For an account of the life and work of Martin Luther, the reader is referred to a series of articles in the *Epworth Era* of 1913. The brevity of these articles forbids even a concise repetition of the facts of his remarkable career.

ZWINGLI.

In Switzerland, two men, who were contemporaries of Luther, did for the Swiss Republic what Luther did for Germany, and ultimately exerted an even wider influence than he. These men were Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin.

Zwingli was born at Wildhaus, St. Gall, in 1484. His parents were well-to-do peasants. Two of his uncles were priests. As he was an uncommonly bright boy, eager to learn and with a talent for music, he, too, was destined for the Church. He was educated at Basel, Bern and Vienna. After his graduation from the University of Basel, he was ordained priest and was appointed pastor of Glarus. During the ten years he spent in this parish he made a diligent study of the Bible, the greatest of the Church Fathers and the works of Wiclif, Huss, and Waldus. His intense patriotism led him to oppose the raising of regiments of Swiss mercenaries to fight the battles of other nations, and especially did he protest against an alliance with France. Finding himself in the minority at Glarus, he accepted the parish of Einsiedeln, in the Canton of Schwyz, a celebrated place of pilgrimage. Through his study of the Scriptures, Zwingli had already come to see the errors of the Church of Rome. At Einsiedeln he saw the absurdity of the inscription over its gates, "Full forgiveness of all sins can be had here." At he once began to preach against the sale of indulgences. As early as 1517 he discussed with his friends the possibility of abolishing the papacy. In 1518 he openly denounced indulgences and drove Samson, the trafficker in these, out of the Canton. By making Zwingli chaplain to the pope, the papal authorities hoped to quietly silence him, but he was not so easily silenced.

His fame as a preacher secured him a call to the cathedral at Zurich. On the first of January, 1519, he began a series of sermons on the life of Christ as drawn from the gospels, and soon men who had given up church-going began to flock back to the services. He now entered upon that career of reform that made him famous. For a time, during the father's mysterious disappearance after the Diet of Worms, the Swiss Reformer became the central figure of the whole Protestant movement. He rapidly won the greatest

of the Swiss Cantons to his views and soon a number of the other Cantons followed, until, at his death, a Confederation of Protestant Cantons stood ready to face the hostility of Rome. To this day the Protestant Cantons are still the most advanced and most prosperous of all the Swiss provinces.

At Zurich, Zwingli's church is still the chief attraction. The building was begun in the 11th century. It is poor and bare when compared with the great cathedrals of other lands. On the west tower stands a statue of Charlemagne, placed there as a recognition of his contribution to the fund that built the church. The interior is utterly destitute of ornament, but it is "Zwingli's church," the "gross Munster." Its true greatness, however, is not its size, but the fact that it was the first church in Switzerland in which the doctrines of the Reformation were preached.



JOHN CALVIN.

Near the church is a statue of Zwingli, and across the bridge, in the Wasser Kirche, is the Zwingli museum, with many interesting documents left by the great Swiss Reformer.

Zwingli was a man of an entirely different type from Luther. His early life was bright and joyous, while Luther's was hard and joyless. He lacked Luther's spiritual experience that came to him from striving after peace with God. He was a Humanist, with the Humanist's broad outlook, but with a will to correct the evils of the time. He viewed matters from the intellectual rather than the purely religious side, and his reforms were carried out with less passion and more tact than the German Reformer ever displayed. If Zwingli had a passion it was patriotism. At different periods of his life he was chaplain to a Swiss regiment. His death occurred on the field of battle at Kappel, October 10th, 1531, as the result of a spear thrust that he received while bending over a wounded soldier to comfort him.

JOHN CALVIN.

It was reserved, however, for a greater than Zwingli to make Switzerland famous as the home of the Reformed faith. Geneva, in the west, soon surpassed Zurich as a centre of Protestant influence. The one man to whom, more than all others, this was due was John Calvin.

Born in Noyon, Picardy, in 1509, Calvin, whose father was a lawyer, was edu-

cated for the church. Later he decided, with his father's approval, to follow the practice of law. But while he was engaged in legal studies, he became deeply interested in the Scriptures and in the works of the Reformers. At Paris, in 1533, he began to speak freely against the Romish Church and its faith. Persecution drove him from France and Switzerland became the land of his adoption.

He settled first at Basel, where he published his famous "Institutes." After a brief visit to Italy and another to his native land, he sold his father's estates and returned to Switzerland. Through the influence of law and the stimulation of conduct was given to the people. The city became a theocracy. No prelate ever wielded more autocratic powers than Calvin. The sternest and strictest morality was demanded. His regulations even took the form of determining the style of clothes the citizens might wear.

Naturally a reaction set in against the severity of Calvin's rule, and the Reformer, finding himself in disrepute, left Geneva and settled in Strassburg. There, in 1539, he married a widow, Dellete de Bure.

Geneva, meantime, like England, under Charles II, sickened of the profligacy that prevailed under the Libertines, and Calvin was recalled. His enduring work now began. Geneva was made a place of refuge for Protestants of all lands. Here the English Puritans were taught their theology. Here the Bible was translated. Here a great school of Protestant theology was established and all under the guidance of Calvin. His labors were prodigious. Teaching, writing, preaching, correspondence, controversy, government took up every hour of his days at this period. His writings were voluminous. The marvel is that he was able to accomplish so much. He was a man of frail physique. He had a thin, pale, finely chiselled face, a well-formed mouth, a long pointed beard, black hair, a prominent nose, a lofty forehead and flaming eyes. He was modest, plain and scrupulously neat in dress, orderly in all his habits, extremely temperate in eating, scarcely allowing himself sufficient food for vigorous work.

Calvin was intolerant. It was a day of intolerance, but his intolerance led him to participate in a crime that is a blot upon his character and a stain upon Protestantism. The burning of Michael Servetus, for denying the doctrine of the Trinity, admits of no defence.

Calvin left his mark indelibly upon the Protestantism of Holland, England, Scotland and the New England States. These hold to what was known as the "Reformed" faith as distinct from the Lutheran.

Unfortunately for Protestantism, Luther and the Swiss Reformers could not agree on the question of the Lord's Supper and the relations of Church and State, and Protestantism was divided when it should have been united and strong.

JOHN KNOX.

In the "old town" the visitor to Geneva is shown the site of the house where Calvin lived, and near by the old Romanesque Cathedral, dating back to the tenth century, where Calvin preached, and in an adjoining street he is shown the church where John Knox, a no less