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ULRICH ZWINGLI: THE GREAT SWISS REFORMER.

Anniversary of his Death.

(The following article is reprinted from the October issue of "THE ENGLISH CHURCHMAN" with due acknowledgement.)

Ulrich Zwingli, who died on October 11th, 1531, did for Switzerland what Luther accomplished for Germany, and our own Reformers for England. A few weeks after the birth of Luther in a miner's cabin in Saxony, Ulrich Zwingli was born in a herdsman's cottage among the Alps. His surroundings in childhood, and his early training, were such as to prepare him for his future mission. Reared amid scenes of natural grandeur and beauty, his mind was early impressed with a sense of the power and majesty of God. The history of the brave deeds achieved upon his native mountains, kindled his youthful aspirations: and at the side of his pious grandmother he listened to the few precious Bible stories which she had gleaned from amid the legends and traditions of the Church.

Like John Luther, Zwingli's father desired an education for his son, and the boy was early sent from his native valley. At the age of 13 he went to Berne, which then possessed the most distinguished school in Switzerland. Here determined efforts were put forth by the friars to allure the lad into a monastery. They realised that his natural ability, and his genius for music and poetry, would be more effective than all their pomp and display, in attracting the people to the services in their churches. Providentially his father received information of the designs of the friars. He had no intention of allowing his son to follow the life of the monks: and he directed the lad to return home without delay. But young Zwingli could not be long content in his native valley, and soon he resumed his studies, this time at Basle. It was here that he first heard the message of the Gospel.

Wittembach, a teacher of the ancient languages, had been led to study the Holy Scriptures, and he declared that the death of Christ was the sinner's only ransom. To Zwingli these words came as a ray of light.

THE SCRIPTURES.

When Zwingli entered upon his life-work, his first field of labour was in an Alpine parish, not far distant from his native valley. Having received (in 1506) ordination as a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, he devoted himself to the search after divine truth. The more he searched the Scriptures, the clearer appeared the contrast between their truths and the heresies of Rome. Some of the practices of the Roman Church began to arouse his indignation, especially the superstitious worshipping of relics, and the selling of indulgences. In 1516 Zwingli was invited to become a preacher in the convent at Einsiedeln. Among the chief attractions there was an image of the Virgin which was said to have the power of working miracles. Pilgrims at all seasons resorted to this shrine of the Virgin. On these occasions Zwingli would seize the opportunity to proclaim liberty through the Gospel to the pilgrims. To some of his listeners such teaching was unwelcome: they found it difficult to comprehend the pardon freely offered to them through Christ. But there were others who received with gladness the tidings of Christ's redemption. The Church authorities were not blind to the work which Zwingli was accomplishing, but for a time did not interfere. Meanwhile the truth was gaining a hold upon the hearts of the people.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH.

Three years later Zwingli was called to the office of preacher in the Cathedral at Zurich. The ecclesiastics, by whose invitation he came to Zurich, proceeded to instruct him as to his duties. Zwingli listened in silence, and in reply he proceeded to explain the course which he proposed to adopt. "It is to the glory of God, to the praise of His only Son, to the salvation of souls, and their instruction in the true faith, that I desire to consecrate my ministry". Already an interest had been awakened in the truths he taught, and the people flocked in great numbers to listen to his preaching. After a time, however, opposition arose. The monks set themselves to hinder his work and condemn his teachings.

A strong impetus was given to reform by the appearance of the plague which swept over Switzerland

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in the year 1519. Zwingli was himself smitten down, and when he came back from the gates of death, it was to preach the Gospel with greater fervour than ever before. Step by step the Reformation advanced in Zurich. Repeated attacks were made upon Zwingli, but the efforts of the ecclesiastics only furthered the cause which they sought to overthrow. The truth continued to spread. The Bishop of Constance dispatched three deputies to the Council of Zurich accusing Zwingli of teaching the people to transgress the laws of the Church, but the Council declined to take action against Zwingli, and Rome prepared for a fresh attack. While the Romanists appealed for authority to the customs of the Church, the reformer adhered steadfastly to the Holy Scriptures.

A conspiracy was formed against his life, and his enemies insidiously prepared a conference to be held in one of the cantons inimical to the new doctrines. To this he prudently declined to go. In October, 1531, five Roman Catholic cantons took up arms, and having published a manifesto, marched into the field, but the people of Zurich had taken no measures for their defence. A battle ensued, and though the Zurichers defended themselves valiantly, they were at length compelled to yield, and were entirely routed. Zwingli, who had accompanied them, received a mortal wound at the commencement of the action, from which he died. Thus at the age of 47 his glorious career came to an end.

E. M. B.

SWISSAIR HAS BEATEN THE RECORD BETWEEN LONDON AND ZURICH.

A few days ago a Convair Liner of SWISSAIR, which operates the service between London and Zurich, has linked the two cities in 1 hour 46 minutes, that is at an average speed of 283 miles per hour. Favourable winds have naturally helped to achieve this best performance. The duration of a flight from London to Zurich normally varies from 2 hours 15 minutes with Convair Liner, to 3 hours 10 minutes with DC-3 aircraft.

Recently SWISSAIR has already established a similar record between London and Geneva in 1 hour 42 minutes, also with a Convair Liner.

Xmas Greetings

Following former years' practice we propose to publish again in our December issue a collective greeting.

The scarcity of paper and the costs of Xmas cards, should induce many of our subscribers to make use of this facility to extend to their friends the compliments of the season.

Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office not later than Tuesday, December 5th, 1950, together with remittance for 6/-.

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