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JOHN KNOX REFORMER.

The Sermon of Rev. Curtis E. Shields.

The following is the text in full of Rev. C. E. Shields' sermon on "John Knox and the Scotch Reformation," delivered at the Hall Church on Sunday morning, June 11th, 1905:

It has been my privilege at different times to speak of the life and works of some of the great reformers who have exerted their influence to keep pure the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. It is well for us to mark the course of providence in the history of the Church. Such providence is a kind of secondary gospel, which points out the issue of certain tendencies of belief, and shows the preserving and governing hand of God in the affairs of His Church. The study of high moral purpose as it is manifest in the strong characters of the Church must be profitable. We admire the courage of those who dared to do and suffer for conscience sake. In these more favored times of peace, their sturdy devotion is a healthful tonic to quicken our cooling love and fire our lagging zeal.

A considerable portion of the Protestant Church is, at about this time, doing honor to the memory of John Knox, as they celebrate the quarter-centennial of his birth. It is with real pleasure that I take up the study of Knox as the leader of the Reformation movement in Scotland. And yet it is with some hesitancy, because it is altogether likely that the incidentals of his career, and the local coloring of his life, are more familiar to many of you than to myself. But Knox is not dependent on local circumstance. The chief features of his work are an essential part of Church history and must be considered as such.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century produced three figures who towers above all others in the prominence and efficiency of their work—Luther, Calvin and Knox. Luther was the first in point of time and this circumstance gives him a certain priority. He more than any other of the reformers, impressed his personality upon his work. He not only entered heart and soul into the movement in Germany; for a time he was the movement. He left the stamp of his individuality upon the life and speech of his people. But he did not influence the political conditions of the German states to any great extent.

Calvin was in physical characteristics the exact opposite of Luther. His personality called forth no enthusiasm. He was supported by no great national movement. He had no people of kindred blood and sympathies to make him a popular idol. The land of his labors was not the land of his birth. But he was the intellectual giant of his times. He was the keenest theologian since St. Augustine, if not since St. Paul. He furnished the stable theological foundation for the Reformation. And he was the chief outside influence in molding the Scottish thought of that time.

The conditions in England were different from other parts of Europe. Here no one man stands in undisputed leadership. The Reformation was patronized, and then checked by Royal authority. The laity did not participate so freely in the movement; and the affairs of Church and State were kept in closer union.

The positive movement toward the Reformation in Scotland was a little later than on the continent, but when it came, it entered into the very life of the people. It was thorough and complete. More radical than the movement in England, it was modeled closely after Geneva, from whence Knox drew his inspiration. Laymen participated largely in the effort and contributed much to its vitality, and to the future strength of the Church.

Scotland had no such middle-age period of progress as had England. No Grosseteste, Anselm or Wycliffe had appeared to check growing abuses and stimulate the pious impulses of the people. As a conse-

quence the affairs of the Church were in sad disorder. Perhaps this made the reactions more radical and complete.

The first martyr of the Scottish list was Patrick Hamilton, who had studied on the continent and brought back to his professorship at St. Andrews a strong liking for the doctrines of Luther, which were then rousing Germany. Bishop Beaton invited him to a friendly discussion of the points at issue, and burned him for his doctrine of Justification and his popular use of Scripture. After Hamilton came Geo. Wishart. He too came under the influence of the Lutheran doctrines, and like Hamilton he was burned by Bishop Beaton. But Wishart did not pass from the scenes until his influence had taken hold upon the man who was to shape Scotland's religious future. What Stephen was to Paul in the Apostolic age, Wishart was to Knox in the Scotch Reformation. Knox's love for Wishart was so great that he begged to share his imprisonment and martyrdom. "Go back to your bairns," said Wishart, "one is sufficient for a sacrifice." It was fortunate for Scotland that Knox heeded the advice.

John Knox was born in Haddington in 1505, and he was given to live in a time which saw the development of most important history in church and state. He was four years the senior of John Calvin, and was born twelve years before Luther posted his famous Theses at Wittenberg. He saw the reign of Henry VIII and part of Elizabeth's reign in England. Francis I, of France died at about the time Wishart's mantle fell upon Knox. He saw the reign of Charles V, and the first years of Philip II in Spain and the Netherlands. He must have been familiar with the struggle of William of Orange, and he died a few months after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Knox was not a great originator, but he was a great adapter and administrator. He was much like Calvin in his physical characteristics and in his habits of thought. He was like Luther in molding the religion life of a people. But he surpassed Luther in the political influence which he exerted. Luther moulded a people, but Knox was instrumental in furthering national stability also.

His life divides naturally into three periods, which might be called the period of his preparation; the period of his exile; and the period of his power. Of the first period but little is known. He was educated at Haddington and St. Andrews, and at the age of thirty was ordained to the priesthood. He never entered upon the duties of his priestly office, but turned aside to teaching. He was tutor to the sons of Hugh Douglass and John Cockburn when he came under the influence of George Wishart. Wishart referred to these pupils when he admonished Knox "To go back to his bairns." The Martyrdom of Wishart brought about a reaction against the persecutors. Beaton was murdered in his castle at St. Andrews by a band of nobles, and the place became for the time a stronghold of the reforming interests. Here Knox took refuge with his pupils. Here his great gift as a preacher was first discovered. A mouthpiece for the Reformation had at last appeared and St. Andrews Church soon resounded with his vigorous discourse.

His work at St. Andrews lasted little more than a year when the city was taken by the French, and Knox began thus as a prisoner his twelve years of wandering and exile. The first twenty months of this period he spent rowing as a slave in a French galley. He was chained to a bench beside all kinds of low criminals, exposed to the rigours of climate, and the most exacting toil. We do not know how he escaped from the galley but it was possibly in some way through the influence of Edward VI who had now come to the throne of England. Knox went to England and became one of the six chan-

(Continued on Page Four)

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