Switzerland. (in German).

One of the great leaders of the Swiss church in the seventeenth century was Johann Jacob Breitinger, amstites of the Reformed Church in Zürich. It was Breitinger perhaps more than any other single person who was responsible for bringing the Reformation out of the area of doctrinal disputation and into the lives of his people.

Born in Zürich in 1575, Breitinger traveled extensively in his youth throughout Germany and the Netherlands, studying in Herborn, Marburg, Franacker (Friesland), Heidelberg and Basel before taking over the pastorate at Zumikhen, near Zürich, in 1597. In 1600 he returned to his native Zürich to become preceptor at the Gymnasium, later (1605) professor of logic in the Collegium humanitatis and (1611) dean of St. Peter's church. He was then offered the professio theologica, but he refused it. In 1613 Breitinger became pastor of the Great Minster there, and in 1618 he was sent to the synod at Dordrecht. He died on April 1, 1645.

Like his predecessor Zwingli, Breitinger made his influence felt in civic and political affairs as well as in religious matters. There is hardly any phase in the ecclesiastical and civic life of Zürich in which he did not at some time take an
active hand. Breitinger introduced general hymn-singing in the Reformed Church, set up Sunday schools, revised the system of elementary schools, and established a general day of prayer; he created scholarships for worthy students, helped found numerous charitable institutions and houses for the poor, and introduced an orderly system of keeping records in his church.

In his role as a leader in the pro-Sweden faction in Swiss politics, Breitinger attempted in 1632 to get reformed Switzerland to come to the aid of Gustavus Adolphus - which would have involved his country in the Thirty Years' War.

No churchman of his time could compare with Breitinger in speaking out sternly and boldly against the shortcomings of clergy and officials alike. From his pulpit Breitinger protested against such things as foreign military service, bribery and corruption in official circles, and the squandering of public property; but the city councilmen never dared take any action against the immensely popular preacher. His masterly synodal sermons evidence a deep loyalty to his calling and a far-sighted conception of the role of a pastor. In later life Breitinger retreated from the political sphere and confined himself to church-related activities. To the end he remained a staunch supporter of the Second Helvetian Confession and held sternly to the teachings of the Reformation.

Füssli has given here a detailed account of Breitinger's life and work; interspersed throughout his narrative are long quotes from the writings and speeches of Breitinger. Thus, the
bulk of the manuscript consists of excerpts from Breitinger's own work which appear to have been simply copied verbatim by Füssli. The biographer includes speeches and sermons containing Breitinger's ideas on everything from catechetical instruction in the church to practices of public officials; after many of the quotes he tells what the consequences of that particular sermon or speech were.

The author himself is without a doubt a member of the famous Füssli family of Zürich; he may have been the Heinrich Füssli (1677-1722), grandfather of Obmann J. Heinrich F. (1745-1832), who was a soldier, village mayor, and later Landvogt (provincial governor) of Regensburg. (See Neue Deutsche Biographie and Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz.)

Folio, 33 1/2 cm. x 20 1/2 cm.

639 pp. — fully paginated.

Vellum binding in fair condition.
Frontispiece: an etching of Breitinger done by C. Meyer.
Written in German script in a fair hand; still quite legible.
Language is a Swiss dialect of this period (c. 1700).
Title page done in elaborate hand lettering and bears stamp of Sir Thomas Phillipps.

Bibliographical note:
Breitinger's own writings include a handwritten autobiography (According to Mörikofer in Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie: "... worth being printed but too candid to have been printed in former times") in: Miscellanea Tigurina, 3 vols.; (Zürich, 1722-24); a revision of the New Testament of the Zürich Bible (Zürich, 1629); and various synodal sermons published between 1634 and 1643. Twenty-three volumes of his correspondence are in the Staats-archiv in Zürich.
Secondary literature dealing with Breitinger:


Gallati, F. "Eidgenössische Politik zur Zeit des 30 jährigen Krieges," in Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte, Bd. 43 (Zürich, 1918), S.110 f., and Bd. 44 (Zürich, 1919).


Mörkofer, J. K. Johann Jacob Breitinger und Zürich: Ein Culturbild aus der Zeit des 30jährigen Krieges (Leipzig, 1873).

(See also biographical articles on Breitinger in Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Neue Deutsche Biographie, Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz, and Jöcher's Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexikon, Bd. 4.)

7 October 1967
JoAnn L. Strateman