

knights, and nobles. Rarely had he been in the presence of one such dignitary never of a great assemblage like this. The chancellor said: "Martin Luther, have you written these books?" Luther answered, "Yes." The chancellor continued: "Martin Luther, are you ready to renounce what is written in these books?" Luther said, "Will you give me twenty-four hours to consider?" The chancellor exclaimed: "Martin Luther, you have known ever since you left Wittenberg that you were going to be asked this question. Why are you not now ready to answer?" Abashed, Luther replied in a low tone: "Please give me twenty-four hours to consider." The emperor turned to the man next to him and said, "That man would never make a heretic out of me." They agreed to hear him twenty-four hours later, and he was led away. He experienced the normal reaction of a man brought up as he had been, when standing before the greatest dignitaries on earth.

Luther spent that night in prayer. He stood before the King of Kings, in comparison with whom all earthly potentes are as nothing. He came back the next day a different man. Now he was representing the greatest Lord in the universe. He spoke respectfully before the great assembly. There was nothing of truculence or arrogance in his manner, but fear had departed. We have already noticed how he answered, and how firmly he stood upon the Word of God.

During the remainder of his life Luther faced many dangers. He never knew when he might soon be seized and burned.

After Luther had departed from Worms and a great portion of the Diet had gone home, the papal emissary induced the emperor to sign a statement placing Luther under the ban of the empire and labeling as an outlaw anyone who would give him help or sustenance. The emperor desired to destroy him immediately, but the changing political circumstance of the day forced him, year after year, to put off making a great effort to do so. From time to time local rulers came to Luther's support. During these years his teachings spread more and more widely, and more and more people rallied to his doctrine. When eventually the emperor was able to win freedom from the various political situations that had engrossed so much of his attention, his armies flooded across Wittenberg and in 1547 it was ordered that no worship be carried on in Germany except along the lines that the emperor would permit. By this time, however, Luther was dead. Some of the emperor's friends urged him to dig up Luther's body and burn it, as had been done with John Wycliffe, the pioneer reformed of England, more than a century before. Charles drew himself up to his full height and said: "I fight with the living, not the dead."

Many instances can be given of Luther's wonderful courage during these years. He stood for God's Word regardless of situations that made all his efforts appear hopeless. God gave him a tremendous influence. He was not merely the founder of the Lutheran Church; he was the founder of Protestantism.

It would be hard to think of a more appropriate subject for this particular time than that upon which I have been asked to speak. If anyone would question its appropriateness he might look at the latest issue of TIME magazine. On page 70, under the heading of "Religion" there is a large picture of Martin Luther followed by the words, "From symbol of schism to focus of unity."

The article reads in part: "Once an occasion for Protestants to recall the glories of their heritage and the un-Christian follies of Romanism, Reformation Sunday is becoming an ecumenical event that looks to the future rather than to the past. Across the world this year's celebration, marking the 450th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the Ninety-five Theses at Wittenberg, is being shared in by Catholics as well as Protestants. For both branches of western Christianity the great reformer is increasingly seen, not as a symbol of past schism, but as a potential focus for unity to come. Last week's issue of the Jesuit Weekly American had a portrait of Luther on its cover. Inside an article notes that it is now the consensus of Catholic theologians that 'Luther was a profoundly spiritual thinker who was driven to revolt by worldly and incompetent popes.'"

There is a great deal said about Luther these days. It is the habit, particularly of the liberals, to present the great heroes of the faith as something entirely different from what they actually were. I have before me a copy of The Camden Courier in which there is an article on "the hippies" that ends with this statement: "California Episcopal Bishop, James Pike, has said that more than anything else the hippies are like the early Christians."

If Bishop Pike thinks the early Christians were like the hippies he must have a mental picture of the early Christians that is far removed from anything that any historian has ever described. Similarly, Martin Luther is being transformed into something far different from what he actually was.

We noticed the statement: "Luther was a profoundly spiritual thinker who was driven to revolt by worldly and incompetent popes." This hardly corresponds with fact. Luther had gone a long way before he came into any direct opposition to a pope. He had been brought up to regard the pope as the great spiritual leader of Christendom, and did not begin his movement with any idea of attacking the pope. Nor did Protestantism begin as an attack upon the worldliness and incompetence of popes. It began because Luther gradually learned that it was impossible to present the Gospel under the hierarchy that the popes headed.

We can be sure that the World Council of Churches, in their celebration of Luther, will make much of Luther as a great social reformer, and even as a precursor of the leaders of near-Communist movements. Actually nothing could be farther from the truth. One of the great central themes of Luther's life and teaching was his realization that man is lost in sin and deserves nothing good at the hand of God. He would have been