

Celebrating 400 Years of Protestantism

In and Around New York Fifteen Thousand Churches Will Take Part in the Quadri-Centenary Lutheran Observances

ON Sunday, October the twentieth, the Protestant churches throughout the civilized world will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Reformation. In spite of the war, those interested in the plans believe that the enthusiasm this year will eclipse that of all preceding celebrations. Naturally, the plans centre about the figure of Martin Luther, the reformer, who has been called the greatest polemic the world has ever seen.

Luther, it will be recalled, was a young German monk of lowly descent, possessed of an unusually keen mind and fiery spirit. He made a pilgrimage to Rome, and so much did he disapprove of the life of monks in the Holy City that it

gences to the people within his jurisdiction. This practice consisted of a so-called religious ceremony wherewith a man for the stipulation of a certain sum of money might be absolved from all sin. Joh Tetzel, a Dominican monk, was assigned to sell these indulgences in Saxony, the home of the Germans. Luther thundered forth his indignation against Tetzel and the Church for which he stood from the pulpits of Wittenburg. Besides this, he made several unsuccessful attempts to prevent the entrance of the vendor of God's grace into his territory. These failing, Luther could no longer contain himself, and on the eve of All Saints, Oct. 31, 1517, he nailed to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenburg his

sion to neglect the outward expression can permit the neglect of true repentance.

Every Christian who feels true sorrow for sin is then and there pardoned by God for Christ's sake without any indulgence ticket or other human contrivance.

These and other writings soon led to the excommunication of Luther, and he publicly severed all relationship with the Church of Rome by burning before a large multitude the Papal bull which apprised him of his fall from grace.

This marked the first period of the Reformation, as well as the first period of Luther's life. He went on with his work, spending most of his time in writing theses and disputations, and in translating the Bible into the language of the people. In this work he was helped by the most famous-scholars of the time.

It is in recognition of this work of Luther and those associated with him that the Protestant churches are now working together adequately to honor his memory. According to the Rev. O. H. Pannoke, Secretary of the Quadri-centenary Committee of New York, 15,000 churches in this vicinity are co-operating, including all denominations. The Sunday schools, Men's Bible Classes, Young People's Associations, theological universities and seminaries throughout the country are behind the movement to make 1917 a renaissance of the Reformation. The password of those participating is "Inspiration, Education, Transformation," the three outstanding characteristics of the work of Luther. Prominent clergymen have addressed meetings throughout the country dealing with all phases of the Reformation.

Among the topics to be treated during the weeks before the celebration's climax are: "Martin Luther and Political Liberty," "The Influence of the Reformation on Commercial and Industrial Development," "Social Influence of the Reformation," "The Reformation and the Public School." Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, when asked for his opinion of the celebration, said:

"To recall to the mind of the twentieth century the significance of the great movement known as the Reformation is valuable public service. The modern mind is threatened, as was the mind of the sixteenth century, with the dominance of a philosophy of life and religion which operates to minimize the function and the freedom of the individual and to make each individual merely a cog in the wheel of a powerful and dominating group. The zeal and the individual's everlasting desire for expression and for responsibility, which were foreshadowed in European history by Saint Dominic and Saint Francis, as well as by Roger Bacon, and which later found such an epoch-making voice in Martin Luther, need to find expression today.

"The tyranny which threatens the twentieth century is not the tyranny of any church, but the tyranny of a majority in the State, a majority so constituted that it is not content with guiding the ordinary business of Government but which seeks to conform to a single and narrow type the occupation, the gains, the amusements and the modes of living of every individual. If the world needed a religious and philosophical reformation in the sixteenth century in order to emancipate the individual, surely it needs a social and political reformation in the twentieth century for the same purpose."

The culminating point of interest will be reached on Oct. 28. Sunday schools will be attended by about 1,500,000 children, ministers will deliver special Reformation sermons, mass meetings will be held in the evening, and concerts and pageants in the afternoon. In this city meetings will be held in the Hippodrome, the Academy of Music in Brooklyn, and in various Y. M. C. A. halls.



An Old Engraving, Which Shows Luther and His Colleagues Translating the Bible. From Left to Right, the Four Men Are Melancthon, Luther, Pomeranus, and Cruciger.

has been said he went a mediaeval Christian, meaning thereby a devout Catholic, and returned a Protestant. His promotion to the degree of Doctor of Divinity and his appointment as district vicar for the country around Wittenburg, the city most closely associated with his name, gave him ample opportunity to preach the new gospel—that of the true relationship between man and God.

It was in 1517, however, the period since designated as the year of the Reformation, that things came to a head. A new Pope, Leo X., had been elected. Finding the coffers of the Papal estate empty, he hit upon a common plan for filling them, the one of selling indul-

gences to the people within his jurisdiction. This act is considered by the Protestant world as marking the turning point in the life of Luther. The theses were a continuous harangue against the doctrine and practice of pardon-selling. The three main points contained therein were as follows:

There may be some good in indulgence if it be reckoned one of the many ways in which the forgiveness of God may be proclaimed.

The external signs of sorrow are not the real inward repentance, nor are they as important as that is, and no permis-

sion to neglect the outward expression can permit the neglect of true repentance.

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