

talk too much about the gift being free, without first making sure that people realize how valuable the gift is. We need more conviction of sin. We need more emphasis on true repentance. Sometimes it is expressed as if it were merely a nice present, like a candy bar. "Come and take it. You can have it. It is yours." This kind of illustration is very helpful to anyone who is so burdened with sin that he finds it impossible to believe that God could forgive such a sinner as himself. However, until a person has conviction of sin that sort of illustration is simply confusing. Luther had conviction of sin. All his life the reality of sin was a vital fact to him, as it should be to everyone who has inherited the results of Adam's fall.

After his talk with Staupitz Luther felt better for a time, but he was not yet altogether satisfied. Soon he began to feel miserable again. "Yes," he said, "there is forgiveness of sin, but can I get it? Where can I find it?" Then one day in the monastery library he noticed a Latin book that he had not previously read. He had heard the Bible referred to as an important book and even called the foundation of the Church's faith, but all the emphasis had been placed on the traditions of the fathers, the interpretations of the scholars, and the acts of the Church, rather than on the Bible. Luther began to read the Bible, and soon he found the answer to his problem. This answer was brought out in various places and in various ways, but it all seemed to be summarized in a verse in Paul's letter to the Romans: "The just shall live by faith." Luther said, "Here is the statement of exactly what I need. The just will not live by various types of forms and ceremonies. The just will not live by performing great works. Though I do everything I can to please the Lord, it will profit me nothing except as God has redeemed me through the Lord Jesus Christ." So now Luther's conscience was rooted not simply on the explanation that the godly head of the order had given him, but on the solid rock of God's Word. He had found the peace for which he had been seeking.

This brings us to another factor which was central in Luther's life, but which, I fear, will not be greatly stressed in some of the various meetings that will be held in different parts of the world to celebrate the beginning of the Reformation. However, I am glad to promise that it will receive its proper emphasis at the meeting that the International Council of Christian Churches will hold at Worms, where Luther stood before the emperor. This factor is the great importance of the Bible as the sole source of knowledge in religious matters.

One of the outstanding features of Luther's life is his constant stress on the vital authority of the Word of God.

There are those today who try to represent Luther as a revolutionist, revolting against church authority, but mistakenly failing to go further and reject Bible authority as well. This is an utter misrepresentation of Luther. Luther did not originally revolt from church authority at all. What happened was that he came to

he charge money for it?" He felt that there must be a misunderstanding somewhere, and that the matter should be carefully investigated.

Luther therefore wrote 95 Latin theses in which he presented the principles of salvation by faith as a challenge for scholars to debate. He never dreamed that these theses would cause an upheaval in Europe. Since a great crowd of people would come to Wittenberg on October 31, which was All-Saints' Day, he followed the customary practice of the time and nailed the theses on the door of the church as an invitation to debate the matter.

The next morning as throngs began to come to the church, people asked what was the meaning of this large notice fastened on the door. Someone said, "It is merely some Latin posted by a professor who wants to have a debate." Others asked, "What is it about?" A man who knew Latin, who happened to be standing near, began to translate aloud into German. As he did so, the people asked, "Do you mean that all this money we are spending for indulgences does not really accomplish anything?" "That's what it says," he answered. People became very excited. As more and more people showed interest, someone made a careful translation of the Latin theses into German. Then they were printed and distributed, all without the knowledge of the man who had written them.

In those days there were no telegrams, no trains, no planes, even no decent roads, yet within two weeks copies of these theses had been distributed all over Germany. Within three months they were being distributed in Rome. Soon they were being sold on the streets of Jerusalem.

Let us notice how the theses were received in Rome. Pope Leo X, the Medici pope, was a very fine gentleman. He was not like some of the popes who had immediately preceded him. Shortly before his time Alexander VI, the Borgia pope, had reigned for eleven years. The immoralities and iniquities of the Borgia pope and his family have become proverbial. When one of his sons was murdered, another son was generally considered as a member of the gang who plotted it. The very name Borgia has become synonymous with poisoning and murder. Leo X was not at all like Alexander VI.

Between Alexander and Leo, Julius II was pope. Though advanced in years, Julius was a man of tremendous energy. He determined to extend the Papal States by military conquest. He directed his armies and engaged personally in the campaign. Great numbers of people lost their lives through the military activities of this bellicose pope. Leo X was not like Julius II.

Leo X was a very pleasant gentleman. He gave banquets. He spent large sums of money providing beautiful decorations for St. Peter's church, which he was just starting to build. Some of the finest art treasures of the Vatican today reveal his interest in such matters. He was fond of all aspects of culture. Some of his contemporaries said that he would have been a perfect pope if only he had had some interest in religion.