



THE REFORMER: Martin Luther – alias David Worden – meditates in a city centre bookshop prior to tonight's opening performance

Luther play in 'religious spotlight'

By JIM McDOWELL

Free Presbyterians have said they will be "keeping an eye on" a controversial new play opening in Belfast tonight.

The play is about the Protestant founder Martin Luther.

A Symphony on Luther will be staged at the Arts Theatre over the next week.

It is written by a playwright from west Belfast, 26-year-old Phillip McCann and will be performed by the city-based Nicodemus Productions.

A German is directing the mammoth work which has required ten separate stages to be built, some of them on scaffolding up the centre of the theatre.

A spokesperson at the theatre admitted last night that the work "may be a bit controversial".

She said it put Luther's philosophies into the context of conflict, both abroad and here.

"Its focus point is a sort of crowd psych-

ology," she said. "It relates to Belfast society."

Last night, Free Presbyterian clergyman the Rev David McIlveen said there were no plans by his people to protest at the play or mount pickets – yet.

"We don't know whether it will contain blasphemous material or any other content which Christians may find objectionable," said Mr McIlveen, who has spearheaded and organised such protests in the past.

But the east Belfast clergyman warned: "If it turns out that there is anything contrary to historical fact in the play, we will certainly be making our viewpoint known."

Meanwhile, stage hands were still grappling with the massive set last night. "It's the biggest we've ever had to handle here," an Arts Theatre spokesman said.