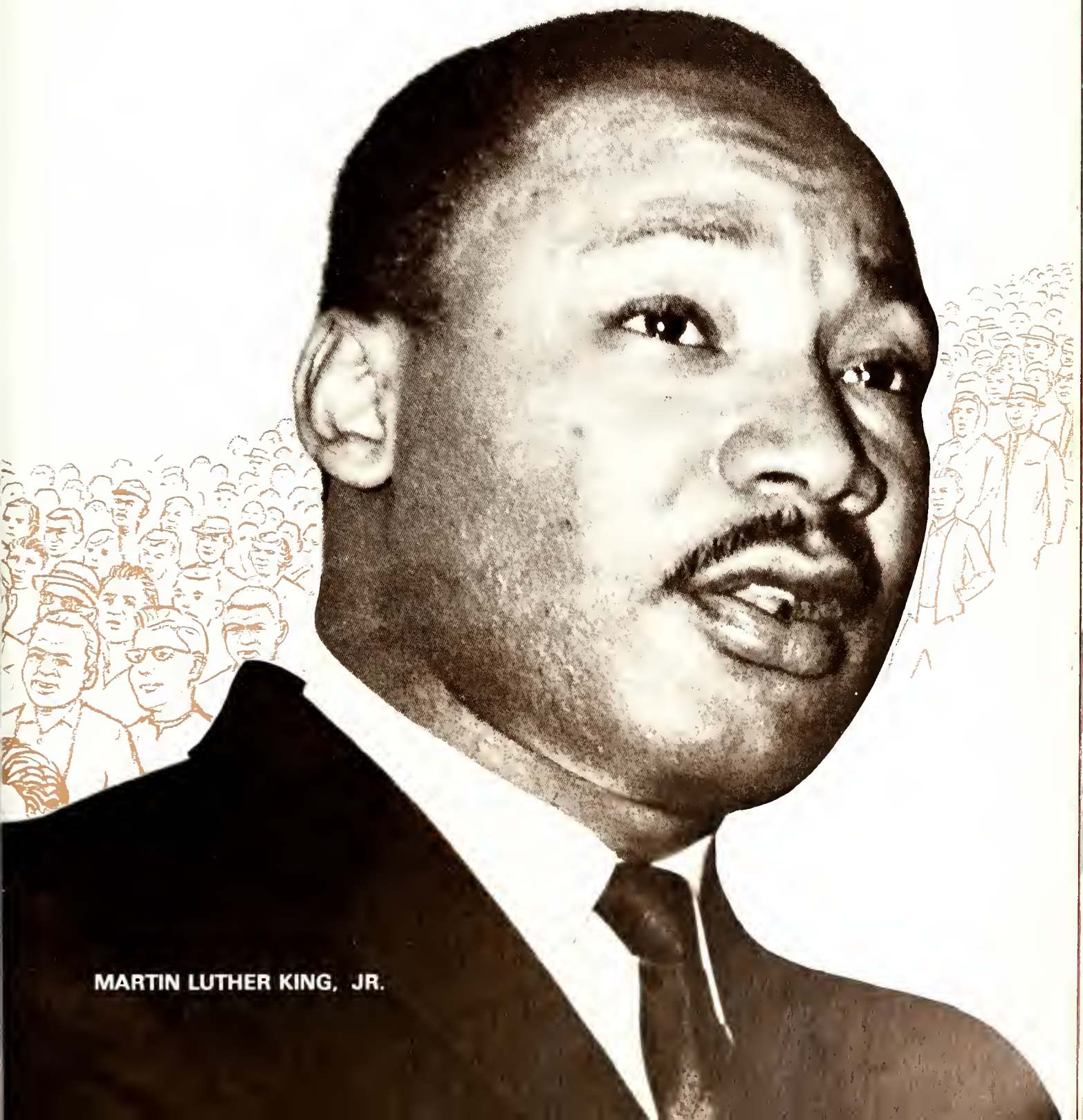


messenger

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

4 / 25 / 68



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

He was the Moses of his time. He led his people out of the hard bondage of slavery. He cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard his voice; the Lord saw the affliction, the toil, the oppression of his people. And Martin Luther King led his people out through the red sea of blood, through cans and bottles and spit. At last he said, "I have climbed the mountain and I have seen the promised land." But like Moses, King did not cross over into the promised land.

Who was he? He was the Isaiah of his time. In the year 1963, with 200,000 people at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, he saw a vision: "I have a dream . . . It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream . . . I have a dream that one day in the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will sit down together at the table of brotherhood . . . I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. . . ." And when the voice asked, "Who shall go for us to fulfill this dream?" Martin Luther King said, "Here I am! Send me." And he led the march.

Who was he? He was the Jeremiah of his time. He believed in peace; he lived for peace. In the face of violence, he was nonviolent. Pressures from government, pressures from blacks and whites came to silence him on war, on the Vietnam carnage. Do not mix civil rights and opposition to war, counseled many of his friends. But the beleaguered prophet said, "I will not be intimidated. I *will* stand for peace."

Who was he? He was the Amos of his time. To a prosperous, hardhearted people, more attuned to property values than human values, more spiritual and law abiding than just and compassionate, he pleaded, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

Who was he? He was the early church of his time. He was in jail: There he sang; there he prayed. And once the apostle wrote an epistle, "Letter from Birmingham jail." Where he went, others went also, "stirring up and inciting the crowds." They called him a revolutionary — he and his crowd upset things. People were disturbed when he set his face to go to Selma, to Chicago, to Washington.

Who was he? He was a man with a name appropriate to his life. Martin Luther. He brought a new reformation to the church, to society. And he died. He died marching for garbage men! And peasants in Vietnam. And you. And me. What a way to die! What a way to live!

Who Was He?

