

A STUDY OF THE

Protestant Reformation

1517 - 2017

The 500th Anniversary





Introduction: Part 14

The papal bull excommunicating Martin Luther arrived in Wittenberg on October 10, 1520. On December 10, at 10:00 a.m. in a fire outside the eastern gate of the city, Luther burned the bull, the works of scholastic theology, and the canon law in the presence of Melancthon, the Wittenberg faculty, and the university students. Less than one month later, on January 3, 1521, Luther was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church - four years after the outbreak of the indulgence controversy. After Charles V became the Holy Roman Emperor, a diet (assembly) was called for the empire and was held between January 28 and May 26, 1521. It was to this diet that Luther would be summoned to give an account of his teachings and doctrine.

Emperor Charles V



Charles V
by Barend van Orley

- Charles' grandfather, Emperor Maximilian, died on January 12, 1519.
- The imperial law of the Golden Bull of 1356 decreed that the German king was to be elected by seven princes (called electors).
- Potential candidates: Charles I of Spain, Francis I of France, and Henry VIII of England (Frederick the Wise refused to be a candidate).
- On June 28, 1519, the princes unanimously elected Charles (1500-1558) in Frankfurt; he was only 19 years old.



Emperor Charles V

- Charles was crowned the Holy Roman Emperor, lord of Spain, Austria, Burgundy (east-central France), southern and northern Italy, the Netherlands, and ‘God’s Viceroy on earth’ in Aachen, Germany on October 22, 1520.
- Aachen, (Latin, *aquae*) near the borders of Belgium and the Netherlands, was the preferred residence of Charlemagne (742–814 AD) and the place where 31 Holy Roman Emperors were crowned King of the Germans from A.D. 936 to 1531.
- He was “obsessed with the desire of creating a great universal dynastic empire strongly supported by Catholic Christianity” and used his energies and resources in opposing Protestantism.

Aachen Cathedral & Charlemagne's Throne



Charles' Attributes

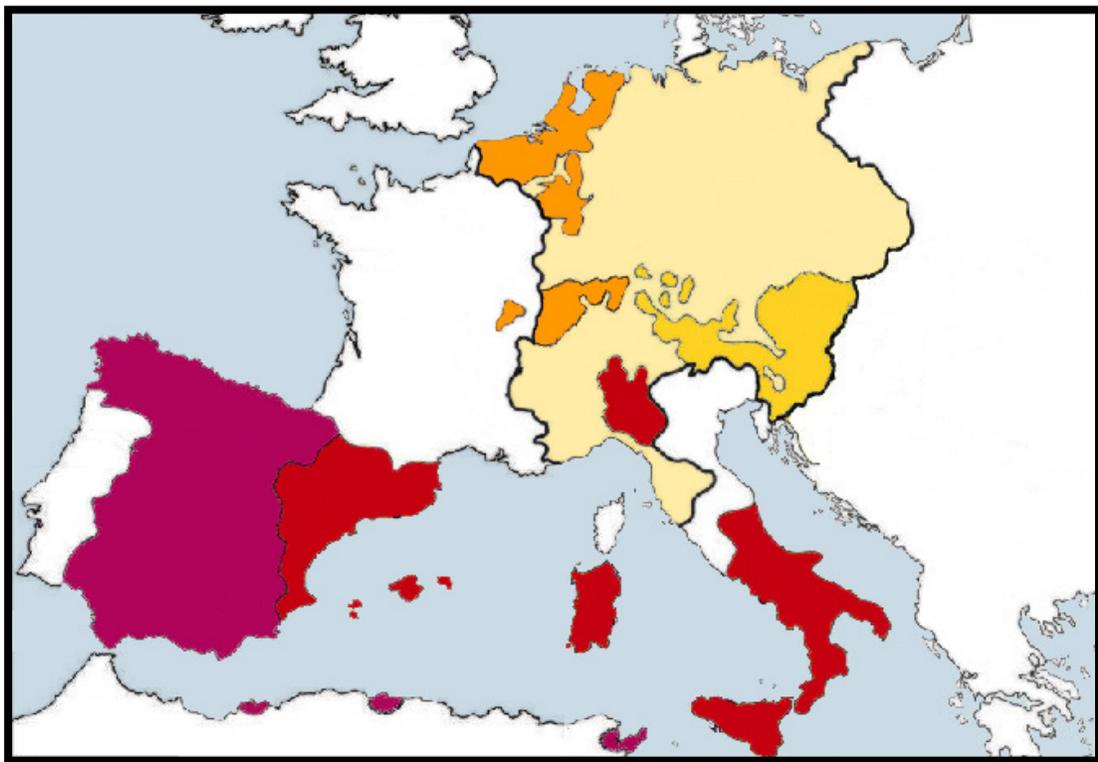
- Politics absorbed his whole life
- Endowed with great intelligence
- Enjoyed military exercises
- Respect for existing institutions
- A firm defender of the papacy
- An extensive knowledge of public affairs
- Attended all the deliberations of his councils from the age of 15
- Pious and silent. Luther said, "I will wager that he does not talk so much in a year as I do in a day."





- *Equestrian Portrait of Charles V*
- Event: Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg
- Artist: Titian (1490-1576)
- Date: 1548
- Oil on canvas
- Location: The Prado, Madrid

Empire of Charles V



- Red: Crown of Aragon
- Magenta: Crown of Castile
- Orange: Burgundian inheritances
- Mustard Yellow: Austrian inheritances
- Pale Yellow: balance of the Holy Roman Empire



Emperor Charles V

- Frederick the Wise asked him to give Luther a formal hearing at the first available meeting of its diet, at Worms in April 1521.
- This diet was the first assembly of the empire over which Charles was to preside.
- Charles faced a divided public opinion. “Some were for Luther, some against, and some in between. Those who were for him were numerous, powerful, and vocal. Aleander, the papal nuncio in Germany, reported that 9/10s of the Germans cried, ‘Luther,’ and the other 1/10, ‘Death to the pope’” (Bainton).



God, Charles V, and the Reformation

“A new actor was about to appear on the stage. God designed to bring the Wittenberg monk face to face with the most powerful monarch that had appeared in Christendom since the days of Charlemagne. He selected a prince in the vigor of youth, and to whom everything seemed to announce a long reign – a prince whose scepter extended over a considerable part of the old world, and even over the new, so that (according to a celebrated saying) the sun never went down on his vast dominions; and to him he opposed that lowly Reformation, begun in the secluded cell of a convent at Erfurt by the anguish and the sighs of a poor monk. The history of this monarch and of his reign was destined, it would seem, to teach the world an important lesson. It was



God, Charles V, and the Reformation

to show the nothingness of all the strength of man when it presumes to measure itself with the weakness of God. If a prince, a friend to Luther, had been called to the imperial throne, the success of the Reformation might have been ascribed to his protection. If even an emperor opposed to the new doctrines, but yet a weak ruler, had worn the diadem, the triumph of this work might have been accounted for by the weakness of the monarch. But it was the haughty conqueror at Pavia who was destined to vail his pride before the power of God's Word; and the whole world beheld the man, who found it an easy task to drag Francis I a prisoner to Madrid, obliged to lower his sword before the son of a poor miner."



Luther's Letter to Charles V

“It is not presumptuous that one who through evangelical truth has ascended the throne of Divine Majesty should approach the throne of an earthly prince, nor is it unseemly that an earthly prince, who is the image of the Heavenly, should stoop to raise up the poor from the dust. Consequently, unworthy and poor though I be, I prostrate myself before your Imperial Majesty. I have published books which have alienated many, but I have done so because driven by others, for I would prefer nothing more than to remain in obscurity. For three years I have sought peace in vain. I have now but one recourse. I appeal to Caesar. I have no desire to be defended if I am found to be impious or heretical. One thing I ask, that neither truth nor error be condemned unheard and unrefuted.”



Luther's Summons to Worms

- On March 6, 1521, an invitation was issued by Emperor Charles V to Luther to attend the Diet at Worms.
- It read: “Honorable, beloved, and devoted Luther. Since we [the Emperor] and the estates of the Holy Empire...have proposed and decided to obtain information from you about your doctrines and books, we give you safe-conduct...with the desire that you should set out, and that under our protection you will appear here among us and not stay away.”
- By the Emperor's electoral oath, no citizen was allowed to be placed under imperial ban without a hearing.

Jerome Aleander



- Aleander was a papal nuncio (papal ambassador to a foreign court or government) who, along with John Eck, was charged with printing and disseminating Luther's bull, *Exsurge Domine*.
- Aleander was a humanist and master of three languages – Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.
- He was charged with the task of addressing the Emperor Charles and his court. "To our beloved son Charles, Holy Roman Emperor and Catholic King of Spain."



Jerome Aleander

- Aleander was advised that if Luther demanded a hearing before the court of the Emperor Charles, he was to reply that the case was being handled solely by Rome.
- His objective was to have Luther's case settled arbitrarily by the Emperor without consulting with the German leaders. He was adamant that Luther should not receive a hearing before a secular tribunal. "He had already been condemned by the Church, and the laity should simply implement the Church's decision and not re-examine grounds of condemnation."



Jerome Aleander

- “As for myself, I would gladly confront this Satan, but the authority of the Holy See should not be prejudiced by subjection to the judgment of the laity. One who has been condemned by the pope, the cardinals, and prelates should be heard only in prison. The laity, including the Emperor, are not in a position to review the case. The only competent judge is the pope. How can the Church be called the ship of Peter if Peter is not at the helm? How can she be the ark of Noah if Noah is not the captain? If Luther wants to be heard, he can have a safe conduct to Rome. Or His Majesty might send him to the inquisitors in Spain. He can perfectly well recant where he is and then come to the diet to be forgiven. He asks for a place which is not



Jerome Aleander

suspect. What place to him is not suspect, unless it be Germany? What judges would he accept unless Hutten and the poets? Has the Catholic Church been dead for a thousand years to be revived only by Martin? Has the whole world gone wrong and Martin only has the eyes to see?"

- "If you Germans pretend to shake off the yoke of obedience to Rome, we will act in such a manner that, exterminated by mutual slaughter, you shall perish in your own blood." Luther responded: "This is how the pope feeds Christ's sheep."



Aleander's Contrary Legal View

- Aleander's view was that on the last day for Luther's submission, January 3, 1521, he was to be "considered an incorrigible, notorious heretic and to be placed under ban automatically, according to canon and imperial law."
- This papal nuncio realized that this was a pressing and critical issue: "How much evil and harm Martin Luther's agitation and rebellion has caused, how much misery he has brought upon the Christian people, what further damage he daily inflicts, is as clear as day; that is why it is necessary and crucial to see to it that his subversive sect be wiped out forthwith, and without any further postponement."

Responses from Erasmus

- The inclemency of this bull ill comports with the moderation of Leo.”
- “Papal bulls are weighty, but scholars attach more weight to books with good arguments drawn from the testimony of divine Scripture, which does not coerce but instructs.”



Aleander Before the Diet of Worms

- Aleander walked forward and entered the hall. After placing Luther's works and the papal bull before the assembly, the diet became silent.
- He began: "Most august Emperor, most mighty princes, most excellent deputies! I appear before you in defense of a cause for which my heart glows with the most ardent affection. It is to retain on my master's head that triple crown which you all adore, to maintain that papal throne for which I should be willing to deliver my body to the flames, if the monster that has engendered this growing heresy that I am now to combat could be consumed at the same stake and mingle his ashes with mine."



Aleander's Accusations Against Luther

- He attacks the holy doctrines of the Church.
- He teaches that no one is justified by baptism unless they have faith in the promise of which baptism is the pledge.
- He denies the necessity of works to obtain heavenly glory.
- He denies that we have the liberty and power of obeying Natural and Divine law.
- He asserts that we sin in every one of our actions.
- He preaches in favor of the abolition of monastic vows.
- “Shall I enumerate all the crimes of this Augustine monk?”



Aleander's Accusations Against Luther

- He sins against the dead, for he denies purgatory.
- He sins against heaven, for he says that he would not believe even an angel from heaven (cf. Gal. 1:8).
- He sins against the Church, for he maintains that all Christians are priests (*Priesthood of all Believers*).
- He sins against the saints, for he despises their venerable writings.
- He sins against the councils.
- He sins against the world, for he forbids the punishment of death to be inflicted on any who have not committed a deadly sin.



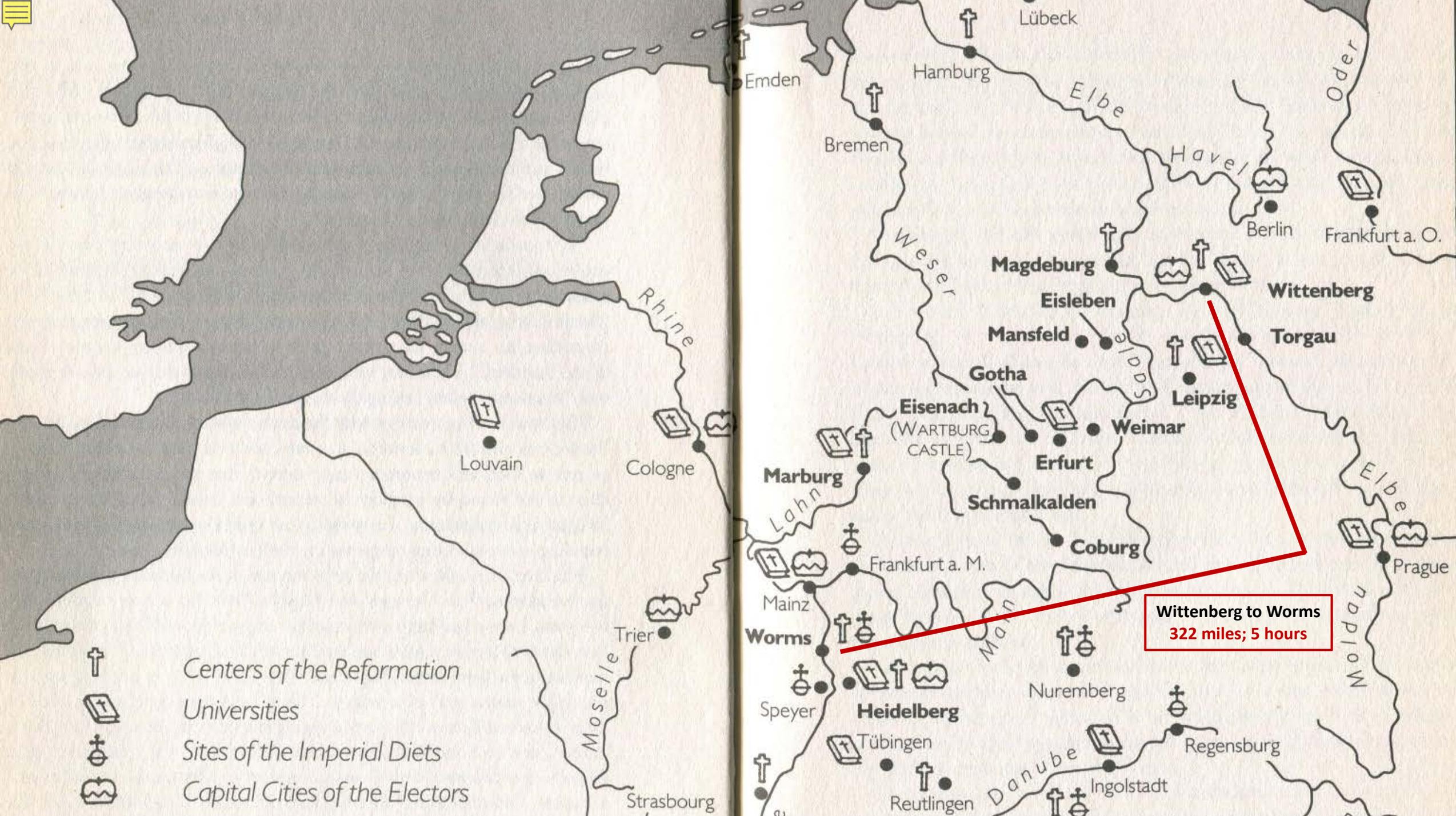
Aleander Addresses Charles V

“I entreat your imperial Majesty to do nothing that may lead to your reproach. Do not interfere in a matter which does not concern the laity. Perform your own duties! Let Luther’s doctrines be interdicted by you throughout the length and breadth of the empire. Let his writings be burnt everywhere. Fear not! In Luther’s errors there is enough to burn a hundred thousand heretics....If the ax is not laid to the roots of this poisonous tree, if the death-blow is not struck, then...I see it overshadowing the heritage of Jesus Christ with its branches, changing our Lord’s vineyard into a gloomy forest, transforming the kingdom of God into a den of wild beasts, and reducing Germany to that frightful state of barbarism and desolation which has been brought upon Asia by the superstition of Mahomet.” He had spoken for three hours.



Luther Travels to Worms

- “I am ready to go to Worms, provided I have a safe-conduct, and learned, pious, and impartial judges. I am ready to answer...for it is not from a presumptuous spirit, or with any view to personal advantage, that I have taught the doctrine with which I am reproached: it is in obedience to my conscience and to my oath as doctor of the Holy Scriptures: it is for the glory of God, for the salvation of the Christian Church, for the good of the German nation, and for the extirpation of so much superstition, abuse, evil, scandal, tyranny, blasphemy, and impiety.”
- Luther left Wittenberg on April 2, and arrived in Worms on April 16, 1521.
- “A dead man returning from the other world and appearing in the midst of the diet would have been less alarming to the nuncios, the monks, and all the papal host, than the presence of the Wittenberg doctor” (D’Aubigne).



-  Centers of the Reformation
-  Universities
-  Sites of the Imperial Diets
-  Capital Cities of the Electors

Wittenberg to Worms
 322 miles; 5 hours

Map labels include: Lübeck, Hamburg, Emden, Bremen, Weser, Elbe, Havel, Oder, Berlin, Frankfurt a. O., Wittenberg, Torgau, Mansfeld, Eisleben, Magdeburg, Gotha, Eisenach (WARTBURG CASTLE), Weimar, Leipzig, Erfurt, Schmalkalden, Coburg, Frankfurt a. M., Mainz, Worms, Moselle, Trier, Strasbourg, Heidelberg, Nuremberg, Danube, Regensburg, Ingolstadt, Reutlingen, Tübingen, Speyer, Mainz, Marburg, Lahn, Rhine, Cologne, Louvain, and Prague.

Luther, on the Snares Set for Him



“The Christian is like a bird tied near a trap. The wolves and foxes prowl round it, and spring on it to devour it; but they fall into the pit and perish, while the timid bird remains unhurt. It is thus the holy angels keep watch around us, and those devouring wolves, the hypocrites and persecutors, cannot harm us.”



Diet at Worms: First Day

- April 17, 1521: Johann von der Ecken, chancellor of the bishop of Trier, asked Luther two questions:
 1. “Do you, Martin Luther, recognize the books published under your name as your own?”
 2. Are you prepared to recant what you have written in these books?”
- Luther’s friend and colleague from Wittenberg, Hieronymus Schurff, who was a professor of canon and imperial law, immediately objected to the first question: “The titles of the books must be named.”
- After this was done, Luther acknowledged them as his own and was given one day to answer the second question.



Diet at Worms: Second Day, 6:00 p.m.

“As for the second [question], I have written works on many different subjects. There are some in which I have treated of faith and good works, in a manner at once so pure, so simple, and so scriptural, that even my adversaries, far from finding anything to censure in them, allow that these works are useful, and worthy of being read by all pious men. The papal bull, however violent it may be, acknowledges this. If, therefore, I were to retract these, what should I do? Wretched man! Among all men, I alone should abandon truths that friends and enemies approve, and I should oppose what the whole world glories in confessing?”



Diet at Worms: Second Day, 4:00 p.m.

“Secondly, I have written books against the papacy, in which I have attacked those who, by their false doctrine, their evil lives, or their scandalous example, afflict the christian world, and destroy both body and soul. The complaints of all who fear God are confirmatory of this. Is it not evident that the laws and human doctrines of the popes entangle, torment, and vex the consciences of believers, while the crying and perpetual extortions of Rome swallow up the wealth and the riches of Christendom, and especially of this illustrious nation?

“Were I to retract what I have said on this subject, what would I do but lend additional strength to this tyranny, and open the floodgates to a



Diet at Worms: Second Day, 4:00 p.m.

torrent of impiety? Overflowing with still greater fury than before, we should see these insolent men increase in number, behave more tyrannically, and domineer more and more. And not only would the yoke that now weighs upon the christian people be rendered heavier by my retractation, but it would become, so to speak, more legitimate, for by this very retraction it would receive the confirmation of your most serene majesty and of all the states of the holy empire. Gracious God! I should thus become a vile cloak to cover and conceal every kind of malice and tyranny!

“Lastly, I have written books against individuals who desired to defend



Diet at Worms: Second Day, 4:00 p.m.

the Romish tyranny and to destroy the faith. I frankly confess that I may have attacked them with more acrimony than is becoming my ecclesiastical profession. I do not consider myself a saint; but I cannot disavow these writings, for by so doing I should sanction the impiety of my adversaries, and they would seize the opportunity of oppressing the people of God with still greater cruelty.

“Yet I am but a mere man, and not God; I shall therefore defend myself as Christ did. ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil’ (Jn. 18:23). How much more should I, who am but dust and ashes, and who may so easily go astray, desire every man to state his objections to my doctrine.”



“Here I Stand”

“Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning – unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted – and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other. May God help me! Amen!”



Charles' Decision

- On April 19, Charles notified the estates that he would defend the ancient faith against Luther.
- On the 24th, Luther met with the archbishop of Trier and seven other princes or churchmen. At this meeting, Luther continued to insist on the authority of Holy Scripture.
- The next day further attempts were made to get him to recant.
- Luther left Worms on April 26 for his return trip to Wittenberg. In route, he was kidnapped and taken to the Wartburg Castle.



