



Anton von Werner's
Luther at the Imperial Diet of Worms

ON JANUARY 3, 1521 THE POPE DECLARED Luther to be a heretic and excommunicated him. On March 6, Emperor Charles V summoned Luther, under protective custody, to a hearing at Worms. On April 17, Luther, whose presence was celebrated among the citizens, stood before the Emperor and the Imperial Diet. He acknowledged his writings, but requested more time before possibly recanting.

At the hearing of April 18, he classified his books as those that did not incriminate at all; those that addressed Papal tyranny, which he could not take back; and those that perhaps did judge individual persons a bit harshly. At the demand of his sworn enemy, the official to the Archbishop of Trier, John Eck, Luther placed himself under the Bible and his conscience; ending his defense with the words: *God help me, Amen.*

On April 19, Charles V proceeded with the enforcement of the church excommunication. For several days attempts to intervene were made by various groups. On April 26, Luther fled Worms, even as Charles V was preparing the Act against him (The Edict of Worms of May 8, 1521), and found refuge at the Wartburg.

The artist Werner concentrates on the historic opening of the hearing, and despite the great number of supporters and antagonists, highlights the confrontation between Luther and Charles V as the key political theme.

The Emperor stands as Luther's opponent with Cardinal Aleander at his side. It was Aleander who had issued the excommunication against Luther, seen to the burning of his writings in the Lowlands and

was exceedingly outspoken at the start of the hearing. Eck, acting as prosecutor, with his leg propped up on the first step of the throne, takes on a prominent posture, but is not an important player.

From left to right are portrayed: Jean Glapion, father-confessor and counselor to Charles V; Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, papal nuncio; Cardinal Jerome Aleander, papal nuncio; Emperor Charles V; Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony; Elector Joachim I of Brandenburg; Richard of Greiffenclau, archbishop of Trier; Albrecht of Brandenburg, archbishop of Mainz; Margrave Bernhard the elder of Baden; John of Saxony; Gregory of Brueck, chancellor of electoral Saxony; John Eck, official to the archbishop of Trier; Philip the elder of Braunschweig; Ernst the Pious of Saxony; Philip I, landgrave of Hesse; Luther; Duke Fernando Alvarez Alba of Toledo; Prince Christian of Denmark; Count John Rantzau, steward of Prince Johann of Denmark; Duke George the Bearded of Saxony; Joao Bransao, steward to the King of Portugal; George of Frundsberg; Jerome Holzschuher; Jacob Fugger; Caspar Sturm, imperial herald; Jerome Schurf, Luther's defense attorney.

It is not possible to determine whether all these persons actually played a part in the hearing. Behind Brandao, Werner placed in the painting in a period costume, the city architect, Matens. To the right of Jerome Schurf, Werner placed himself.

Werner worked "from old pictures and engravings"—above all Cranach, Dürer and Holbein—as he himself shared in a letter dated December 16, 1906, to the Director of the Kiel preparatory school (*Gymnasium*). The image of Luther is compiled from Cranach portraits, both in profile and as an Augustinian monk.