



Against Emperor and Pope: Magdeburg and the Reformation

September 3, 2017 – January 28, 2018

The 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of his theses against the sale of indulgences on October 31, 2017 is being commemorated nationally and internationally as an event with sweeping consequences for cultural, social and power political developments throughout the world.

Magdeburg, with 30,000 residents one of the largest cities of the Holy Roman Empire in the 16th century, assumed a leading role in the renewal of the church emanating from Wittenberg. The Kulturhistorische Museum will be presenting this special site of historical memory of German Protestantism and its powerful influence in the era of wars of religion to the general public in the exhibition "Against Emperor and Pope".

Luther's advocacy of the "pure doctrine of the Gospel" and his struggle against the abuse of indulgences attracted a large following in Magdeburg. Martin Luther preached in the city on the Elbe several times in June of 1524 and installed his friend Nikolaus von Amsdorf as superintendent.

The exhibition will recount the fierce clashes over faith, power and justice between urban spokesmen and preachers as well as the key figures in the empire, Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg and Emperor Charles V. Magdeburg saw itself as the bastion of Protestantism, became a place of refuge for Lutheran-minded religious refugees and evolved into a center of Reformation propaganda. The city refused to make any concessions to the emperor and pope. This position led to bloody consequences during the siege of 1550. Magdeburg's confessional zeal did not seem tempered until the Formula of Concord, a work of unification by Protestant theologians from all over the empire adopted at Bergen Abbey before the gates of the city in 1577.

The exhibition will present the existential conflict over the true Christian faith with original objects documenting the era, tracts and broadsheets, woodcuts and copperplate engravings. Paintings, works of art and every day objects will additionally broaden the focus to include the entire cultural world of the Reformation of the cities in the 16th century.

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