

LutherFacts #36 – Naming the Reformation

Twelve years passed after Martin Luther posted the 95 Theses before there emerged a term that best encapsulated the meaning of his actions. In 1526, after nearly a decade of religious controversy, the Diet of Speyer "temporarily" suspended the ban on Luther and allowed the German princes supporting him to maintain their own religious beliefs. The next three years witnessed a steady growth of Lutheranism across central Germany. Alarmed by this development, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, called the Diet to reassemble and re-institute the original ban on Luther's views. On April 19, 1529, a majority attending the Diet agreed to do so. Among those who voted against that decision were a group of princes who came together the next day and issued a "Letter of Protestation." Within a short period of time, the word "Protestant" became the accepted term of choice for describing those resisting the Pope and established church order. Over the coming decades, reformers in Switzerland, France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, England, and Scotland adopted that particular word as the most effective way of describing the struggle now underway.



Image: *Speyer Maximilianstraße with cathedral in the background*
(self-photographed by Samyack)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Speyer_HDR.jpg