Elector Frederick III of Saxony, called “the Wise” (1532)

Abstract

Saxon elector Frederick III (“the Wise”) (1463-1525) provided critical support to Martin Luther. Although Frederick was a devout Catholic, he protected Luther after the Diet of Worms (1521) by having him “abducted” and kept in hiding at the Wartburg. Frederick’s motives for supporting the Protestant reformer were largely political, for his efforts aimed to curtail the power of the increasingly mercenary Papal States. In 1505, Frederick engaged Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) as his court painter in Wittenberg. Cranach painted this portrait of Frederick III in 1532.
The inscription contains a reference to his strategically wise behavior during the election of a new emperor in 1519. It reads: "Frederick I am called reasonably. I maintained peace in the land. Through great reason, patience and and luck, I resisted many an evil plot. I adorned the land with buildings and established a great new university. At Wittemberg in Saxony, it became known throughout the world. For from there came the word of God and achieved great things in many places. It overthrew the papal empire. And restored true faith. I was chosen to become emperor, but my age forbade it. I elected Emperor Charles, from whom I expected neither favor nor reward."

Source

Source: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Frederick III, the Wise, Elector of Saxony*, oil on beechwood, 1532. Historisches Museum Regensburg. Online available from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AKurf%C3%BCrst-Friedrich-III-von-Sachsen.jpg

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