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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weiden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Wölfen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verführen und Irrtum einführen.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behält denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — *1 Cor. 14:8*

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ARCHIVES

of most just judgment which shall be pronounced upon' impenitent sinners, 'when it shall be said unto them, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"'; has taught us week by week to pray, 'From Thy wrath and from everlasting damnation, Good Lord, deliver us'; and, in the sight of death, put into our mouths the piercing cry, 'O holy and most merciful Savior, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.'" (E. B. Pusey, *op. cit.*, p. IX.) Luther: "Let us take this sincere warning and kind admonition of our gracious God and dear Father to heart and say: I know, dear God, that Thou art concerned about my salvation; I will, then, turn to Thee in true repentance, never forget about the last trumpet, and daily look for Thy coming to judgment. . . . Our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, grant us His Holy Spirit, that we may, in true faith and in a godly life, look for and hasten to the coming of His day, when we shall be caught up in the resurrection of the dead with the elect and blessed, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (VIII: 1333, 1335.)

Luther and the War Against the Turks

By GEORGE W. FORELL,* New York City

Modern psychoanalysis tells us that disease is the touchstone of the healthy mind. What is true in the realm of psychology is not less true in the realm of ethics. The most terrible disease in the realm of human relations is war, and so we can say that war is the touchstone of a healthy ethical system. In its attitude toward war the weakness of an ethical system is revealed. In the war situation an ethical system is revealed as basically unrealistic if it proves unwilling to face the actual situation and therefore uses the escape of absolute pacifism. It is revealed as basically immoral if it condones any war to such an extent that it loses sight of sin and injustice and makes of that war a holy war or a crusade.

Because the attitude toward war growing out of an ethical system has a peculiar significance, it is of considerable value

* This article originally appeared in *Church History*. It is here reprinted by permission. — Ed. NOTE.

to study Luther's attitude toward the war against the Turks. His attitude as expressed here will throw some light upon his theological presuppositions and will serve to illustrate his ethical system.

However, little has been written in regard to Luther's position in the war against the Turks. There are few studies of the subject and not one in English.¹ Yet the war against the Turks formed the colorful background of the Reformation.

In the early years of the Reformation, the Turkish danger had constantly increased. Large parts of southeastern Europe were under Turkish rule. After the sudden death of Selim I, in 1520, Suleiman II became his successor. Some had hoped that he would rest on the laurels of his predecessor, but such hopes failed to materialize. On the contrary, while Selim I had fought his major battles against Egypt in Africa, Suleiman had his hands free to attack Hungary, the southeastern bulwark of Christendom. In 1521 he captured Belgrade, and in the battle of Mohacz in 1526 he routed the Hungarian army. King Louis II was killed, and all Europe lay open to the victorious armies of the Moslems.

Ferdinand of Austria suddenly realized that his country was the next objective of the advancing enemy. He tried to appease the Sultan with diplomacy. Sending ambassadors to the Turks, he offered peace and a "good neighbor policy." But the ambassadors returned with the disquieting message that Suleiman expected to discuss the matter personally with Archduke of Austria — and in Vienna.

Small wonder that not only Austria but Christian Europe in general was terror-stricken. It was at that time that Luther published his first major statement in regard to the Turkish danger. It appeared in 1529 under the title *On War Against the Turk*, and was written to counteract the prevalent opinion that Luther considered the war against the Turks a war against God. This impression of Luther's position had been fostered by the notorious papal bull *Exsurge Domine*, in which Pope Leo X had condemned Luther's theses as heretical. In his fifth thesis Luther had said that the Pope cannot remit any other punishments than those which he or canon law

¹ During the recent war a German, Helmut Lamparter, has examined Luther's position in the war against the Turks. He is especially interested to prove Luther's absolute disavowal of military crusades. Cf. H. Lamparter, *Luthers Stellung zum Tuerkenkrieg* (Muenchen, 1940).

had imposed.² He had claimed that the Pope cannot remit God's punishments. And in his defense of the Ninety-five Theses, of 1518, he had tried to make his point even more emphatic and had added that if the Pope was as well able to remit divine punishment as he claimed, he should stop the advance of the Turk. Luther said that he must indeed be a poor Christian who does not know that the Turks are a punishment from God, and invited the Pope to stop that punishment.³

The Pope had countered by condemning as heretical the following sentence of Luther: "To fight against the Turks is to fight against God's visitation upon our iniquities."⁴ In this misleading form Luther's attitude toward the war against the Turks had been widely publicized. This had given the general impression that Luther considered a war against the Turks sinful and preferred the rule of the Turks to the rule of the Emperor.

Luther had to answer this accusation. He did that in a detailed reassertion of all the articles condemned by Leo X.⁵ In regard to the Turks he said that unless the Pope were put in his place, all attempts to defeat the Turks would prove futile. The wrath of the Lord would continue to be upon all Christendom as long as Christian nations continued to honor those most Turkish of all Turks, even the Romanists.⁶

² *Luthers Werke*, Weimar ed., I, 233, 18: "5. Papa non vult nec potest ullas penas remittere nisi eas, quas arbitrio vel suo vel canonum imposuit." All quotations from Luther's works are from the Weimar edition.

³ *Luthers Werke*, I, 535, 30: "Alioqui si sacerdos ecclesiae sive summus sive infimus potest hanc poenam potestate clavium solvere: pellat ergo pestes, bella, seditiones, terremotus, incendia, caedes, latrocinia, item Turcas et Tartaros aliosque infideles, quos esse flagella et virgam dei nemo nisi parum christianus ignorat. Dicit enim Isa. X Ve Assur! virga furoris mei et baculus ipse est. In manu eius indignatio mea. Licet plurimi nunc et eidem magni in ecclesia nihil aliud somnient quam bella adversus Turcam, scilicet non contra iniquitates, sed contra virgam iniquitatis bellaturi deoque repugnaturi, qui per eam virgam sese visitare dicit iniquitates nostras, eo quod nos non visitamus eas."

⁴ *Bulla Exsurge Domine*, June 15, 1520: "Proeliari adversus Turcas est repugnare Dei visitanti iniquitates nostras."

⁵ *Luthers Werke*, VII, 94ff.: *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X novissimam damnatorum*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 141, 24: "Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat et Bello Turchico abstineat, donec Papae nomen sub caelo valet."

Also VII, 141, 7: "Et iis omnibus non est aversus furor domini, nec dum intelligimus manum dei, percutientis nos in corpore et anima per hos Romanos Turcissimos Turcas."

But this answer merely showed that Luther's pronouncements in regard to the Turks were not a defense of the Turks but an attack against the Pope. It had not clarified his own attitude toward the increasing Turkish danger. Luther did not want the Pope to lead Christendom in a war against the Sultan, but did that mean that he felt that such a war in itself should not be waged? Such an attitude was not uncommon.⁷ Was it also Luther's attitude?

Realizing the importance of Luther's position in this matter, friends had urged him for years to write somewhat extensively on the subject. Finally, in January of 1529, he published the above-mentioned book *On War Against the Turk*.⁸ It could not have appeared at a more opportune moment. On October 9, 1528, Luther had written the introduction to the book and dedicated it to Philip, Landgrave of Hesse. Here he wrote the almost prophetic words "and now that the Turk is actually approaching." It was not half a year later, in May, 1529, that Suleiman actually left Constantinople. In the autumn of the same year the Turkish army reached the outskirts of Vienna and encircled the city. It seemed that Vienna was doomed. Luther heard of the siege of Vienna on his way home from the Marburg Colloquy. It was in Marburg that his attention had been called by Myconius to certain sayings of a Franciscan monk. This man, Johannes Hilten, had predicted the Turkish danger on the basis of certain prophecies in the book of Daniel.⁹ Luther was impressed and worried. He now began to believe that the book of Daniel might throw some light on the contemporary trials of Christendom. It was under the impact of this information and of the siege of Vienna that he decided to write another book dealing with the Turkish danger. Before this plan could be executed, Luther heard with relief that Suleiman and his army had retreated from Vienna. Yet he felt that the repetition of a Moslem advance had to be avoided. In order to do his part in calling the attention of

⁷ *Ibid.*, Briefe, V, 175, 7; No. 1492. Luther to Probst: "*Germania plena est proditoribus, qui Turcas favent.*"

⁸ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 107. "Vom Kriege widder die Tuercken"; cf. "On War Against the Turk," Philadelphia edition, V.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Briefe, V, 191; No. 1501. Friedrich Myconius to Luther.

all people to the Turkish danger, he wrote his *Call to War Against the Turk*.¹⁰

Besides these three major works, there are numerous references to the war against the Turks all through Luther's writings.¹¹ He was so concerned with the Turkish problem that in 1530 he wrote a preface to a little book by a Dominican monk who had spent more than twenty years in a Turkish prison. This book dealt with the religion and customs of the Moslems and was Luther's main source of information on the subject.¹²

All these writings of Luther indicate quite clearly his grave concern with the danger that threatened Christianity from the Moslem world. More than most of his contemporaries Luther realized what was involved in a war or in pacifistic nonresistance against the Turks.

This is the more remarkable in the light of the actual historical situation. Instead of fearing the Turks, Luther had every reason to be grateful to them. It was the constant danger of a Turkish invasion that had kept the emperor from taking severe measures against Luther's reformation. The Empire needed the help of the Evangelical princes in the war against the Turks and therefore had to postpone its plans to destroy Luther. From the point of view of realistic power politics, the safety of the Reformation depended upon the strength of the Turkish armies. From many points of view the Sultan and Luther might have been political allies.

That Luther was aware of this fact is best illustrated by a little episode reported in the *Table Talk*. At one time Luther was informed by a member of an imperial mission to the Turkish Sultan that Suleiman had been very much interested in Luther and his movement and had asked the ambassadors Luther's age. When they had told him that Luther was forty-eight years old, he had said, "I wish he were even younger; he would find in me a gracious protector." But hearing that report, Luther, not being a realistic politician, made the sign of the cross and said, "May God protect me from such a gracious protector."¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 160. Eine Heerpredigt widder den Tuercken.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, LI, 577ff. Vermahnung zum Gebet widder den Tuercken.

¹² *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 205. Vorwort zu dem *Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum*.

¹³ *Ibid.*, T. II, 508, 17: "*Egregius quidam vir nomine Schmaltz Hagonsis civis, qui fuit in legatione ad Turcam, Luthero retulit Turcarum*

Although by all rules of strategy and power politics Luther and the Turks should have been allies, Luther urged war against the Turks. What was the reason?

I. THE DANGER

Luther's position concerning the Turks was determined by study of the Bible. It was Luther's intention to instruct the consciences of Christians on the basis of a study of Scripture. He wanted them to learn "what we must know about the Turk and who he is according to Scripture."¹⁴ According to Scripture, the Turks were dangerous. Luther's attitude was not based upon political speculation in regard to a balance of powers. It was not based upon his desire to preserve a so-called Christian civilization. He thought very little of the Christian civilization of his time. Luther's position in regard to the Turks was the result of a thorough study of Scripture and especially of those passages that seemed to point to the Turkish danger. Before Luther spoke about the Turks, he had first obediently listened to the Word of God.

What was the message of Scripture in regard to the Turks? First of all, they were the rod of punishment that God was sending. In his explanation and defense of the Ninety-five Theses, Luther had called the Turk the rod of punishment of the wrath of God. He had said that by means of the Turks, God was punishing Christendom for its contempt of the Gospel. Pope Leo and his courtiers had tried to use this statement to imply that Luther lacked patriotism and claimed divine sanction for the Turkish sword. In spite of this misrepresentation, Luther repeated in 1529 what he had said before: "Because Germany is so full of evil and blasphemy, nothing else can be expected. We must suffer punishment if we do not repent and stop the persecution of the Gospel."¹⁵

regem ipsum interrogasse de Martino Luthero, et quot annorum esset; qui cum eum annorum 48 aetatis esse dixisset, respondisse fertur: ich wolt, dass er noch junger were, dann er solt einen gnedigen herrn an mir wissen. Respondit Martinus Lutherus facto crucis signo: Behut mich Gott vor diesem gnedigen herrn."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 161, 31: "Das gewissen zu unterrichten dienet wol zur sachen, das man gewis sey, was der Tuercke sey und wofuer er zurhalten sey nach der schrift."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 180, 19: "Denn ich hab droben gesagt, weil Deudsch land so vol bosheit und Lesterung ist, das zu hoch uber macht ist und yn hymel schreyet, kans nicht anders werden, wo wir uns nicht bessern und ablassen von verfolgung und lesterung des Euangelij, wir muessen herhalten und eine starpe leiden."

And he reiterated that as long as the Christian world refuses to repent, it will not be successful in its wars, for the Lord fights against it.¹⁶ Here Luther stood courageously in the prophetic tradition. With the Prophets, he realized that God can and does use heathen nations in order to punish the so-called Christian nations for their unfaithfulness.

But Luther looked at the Turks from still another point of view. For him they were not only the rod of punishment of the wrath of God, but also the servants and saints of the devil.¹⁷ What did he mean by that? This combination of the rod of punishment of the wrath of God with the servants and saints of the devil throws some light upon Luther's peculiar conception of the devil. For Luther the devil was always God's devil, *i. e.*, in his attempt to counteract God he ultimately serves God. The Turks were the servants and saints of the devil. Why did Luther call them saints?

Luther had read a number of books concerning Mohammedanism, and he was aware of the fact that in many respects the Mohammedans lived a morally upright life. Luther thought that compared with the sincerity of Moslem life and Moslem asceticism, the Roman asceticism seemed ridiculous. And in this context he reminded his readers that "the devil also can make a sour face and fast and perform false miracles and present his servants with mystical raptures."¹⁸ Such practices and experiences are the common property of all religions; they do not demonstrate a religion as true. Even the devil's own religion can be accompanied by such experiences and practices. In this sense the Turks are the saints and servants of the devil; their religious exercises

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, XLVI, 609, 2; cf. W. A. LI, 594, 29: "Wollen wir uns nu lassen helfen und raten, So lasst uns Busse thun und die boesen Stueck so droben erzelet bessern. Werden wir aber solches nicht thun, und wollen uns nicht lassen raten, so ist uns auch nicht zu helfen. Und wird vergeblich sein das wir viel schreien der Tuercke sey ein grausamer Tyran. Denn es hilft nichts, das ein boese Kind schreiet uber die scharffe Ruten, Wo es fromm were, so were die Ruten nicht scharff, ja, sie were kein Rute."

¹⁷ For this division cf. H. Lamparter, *Luthers Stellung zum Tuerckenkrieg*; *Luthers Werke*, LI, 617: "Denn der Tuercken heer ist eigentlich der Teuffel heer." *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 187: "Unter andern ergenissen bey den Tuercken ist wol das fuernemste das yre priester odder geistlichen solch ein ernst, dapfer, strenge leben fueren, das man sie moecht fuer Engel und nicht fuer menschen ansehen, das mit allen unsern geistlichen und moenchen ym Bapsttum ein schertz ist gegen sie."

¹⁸ *Luthers Werke*, XXX, 2, 187, 10.

do not disprove it but rather prove it. Luther wanted all soldiers who had to fight the Turks to know their peculiar relationship to the powers of evil. He said: "If you go to war against the Turks, you can be sure that you are not fighting flesh and blood, *i. e.*, against men, for the army of the Turks is actually the army of the devil."¹⁹

The Turk's peculiar relationship to the realm of the devil explained for Luther the renewed vigor of the Moslem armies at the time of the Reformation. He felt that the devil was worried that the rediscovery of the Gospel might endanger his empire and therefore made these powerful attempts to conquer all Europe.

As saints of the devil the Turks were also destroyers of Christian faith and morals. The worth of their religion could not be measured by their religious exercises or their more or less moral legislation. Luther knew only one criterion by which all religion, and therefore also Mohammedanism, had to be judged. His all-important criterion for the truth of religion was its attitude toward Jesus Christ as the Son of God.²⁰ He applied this criterion to Mohammedanism and found it wanting.

Luther realized that measured by a purely moralistic standard, the religion of the Turks would come out fairly well. However, he considered such a criterion invalid. Only the faith expressed in the second article of the Apostles' Creed is a valid standard for the truth of religion. Luther had declared in the Smalcald articles: "From this article one cannot depart or give in, even if heaven and earth should fall. . . . And upon this article rests everything that we teach and live against Pope, devil, and the world. Therefore we must be absolutely certain and never doubt; otherwise everything is lost and Pope and devil and all our other enemies will be victorious."²¹ Now he claimed against the Turkish religion: "Everything depends upon this second article; because of it we are called Christians and through the Gospel we have

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, LI, 617, 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 186, 15: "Und durch diesen artickel wird unser glaube gesondert von allen andern glauben auff erden, Denn die Jueden haben das nicht, die Tuercken und Sarracener auch nicht, dazu kein Papist noch falscher Christ noch kein ander ungleubiger, sondern allein die rechten Christen."

²¹ *Ibid.*, L, 199, 22.

been called to it and baptized upon it and have been counted as Christians. And through it we receive the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life. For this article makes us children of God and brothers of Christ, so that we may become eternally like Him and be His coheirs.”²² The second article of the Apostles’ Creed judges all religion. It is the only valid criterion for Christians. It must be considered in judging the religion of the Turks and is far more important than any possible religious habits and experiences associated with Turkish religion. From this position Luther came to the conclusion that the Koran is a “foul book of blasphemy,” “merely human reason, and without the Word of God and His Spirit.”²³ Its teachings are collected together from Jewish, Christian, and heathen beliefs.²⁴ And since Mohammed denies that Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, he must be considered an enemy and destroyer of the Lord Jesus and His kingdom. “For he who denies these parts of the Christian faith, namely, that Christ is the Son of God and that He died for us and lives now and rules at the right hand of the Father, what has he to do with Christ? Then Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Baptism, Sacrament, Gospel, faith, and Christian doctrine and life are destroyed.”²⁵ Because of his denial of the deity of Jesus Christ the Turk is the destroyer and enemy of the Christian faith.

But the Turks are also destroyers of Christian morals. In spite of all their ascetic rules and religious practices Luther considered them murderers²⁶ and whoremongers.²⁷ The

²² *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 186, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 121, 30: “Ich habe des Mahomets Alkoran etlich stueck, welchs auff deutsch moech predigt — oder lerebuch heissen, wie des Bapsts Decretal heist. Hab ich zeit so mus ichs ia verdeutschen, auf das yderman sehe welch ein faul schendlich buch es ist.” Also XXX, 2, 168, 15: “. . . das ist des Mahomeths Alkoran odder gesetz damit er regirt, In welchem gesetz ist kein goettlich auge, sondern eitel menschliche vernunft on Gottes word und geist.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 122, 29: “Also ists ein glaube zu samen geflickt aus der Juden, Christen und Heiden glauben.”

²⁵ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 122, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 126, 10: “Weil denn nu des Mahometh Alkoran so ein manchefeltiger luegen geist ist, das er schier nichts lest bleiben der Christlichen wahrheit: wie sollt es anders folgen und ergehen, denn das er auch ein grosser mechtiger moerder wuerde und alle beides unter dem schein der warheit und gerechtigkeit?”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 126, 21: “Das dritte stuecke ist, das des Mahomeths Alkoran den Ehestand nicht acht, sondern yderman zu gibt weiber

Turk does not fight wars from necessity or to protect his land. Like a highwayman, he seeks to rob and damage other lands whose people are doing and have done nothing to him. This he does because according to his religion it is a good work to attack and murder "unbelievers." Held in highest esteem are those Turks who are most diligent in increasing the Turkish kingdom through murder and robbery.

Furthermore, the Turk is the enemy of the institution of marriage. Luther knew that it was customary among the Turks for a man to have any number of wives. He had heard that Moslems bought and sold women like cattle. This made the Turks whoremongers and was contrary to all true Christian morality.

Luther saw in the Turks the punishment of God and the servants and saints of the devil. He discerned their odd combination of purity and depravity. He found them possessed by a spirit of lies and of murder. All this could lead Luther to only one conclusion: the Turk is the Antichrist.

Luthers' identification of the Turk with the Antichrist sounds confusing in view of his frequent claims that it is the Pope in Rome who is the real Antichrist. But for Luther two Antichrists presented no problem. He said: "The person of the Antichrist is at the same time the Pope and the Turk. Every person consists of a body and a soul. So the spirit of the Antichrist is the Pope, his flesh is the Turk. The one has infested the Church spiritually, the other bodily. However, both come from the same lord, even the devil."²⁸ This conclusion determined Luther's recommendations for the defense against this enemy.

II. THE DEFENSE

It is not sufficient to state that Luther saw the danger that threatened Europe because of the advance of the Turks. He also realized that he had to suggest means for the defense of Christendom against the approaching danger. It would not have been very helpful if Luther had been satisfied merely to point out the evil confronting Christendom without adding suggestions for its removal. What could be done in the

zu nemen wie viel er wil. Und widderumb verlest und verkeufft welche er wil, das die weiber aus der massen unwerd und veracht ynn der Tuerkey sind, werden gekauft und verkaufft wie das viehe.'

²⁸ *Ibid.*, T. III, 158, 31.

face of such a great peril? What was the duty of the Christian man in regard to the Turkish danger?

As usual, Luther separated the duties of a man as a Christian from the duties of a man as a citizen. He felt that as Christians all people were called to repentance and prayer. Luther was aware of the guilt of the so-called Christian nations. He knew also that sin and guilt were not limited to the German territories under the rule of Rome and of Roman Catholic princes. They were guilty of grave sins, for they had persecuted the Word of God openly.²⁹ But the Evangelicals also had lacked the necessary respect for the Word of God. Often they had used it to serve their own lusts and desires.³⁰ Therefore, both Romans and Evangelicals had deserved the punishment of God.

In his *Call to Prayer Against the Turk* Luther went into detail, enumerating the manifold sins and transgressions of the so-called Christian nations. It was because of this general depravity that one should not be surprised that God had sent the Turks to punish Germany. Luther felt that Germany received her deserts. In order, therefore, to assure a successful defense against the Turk it was necessary for all to

²⁹ *Ibid.*, LI, 585, 13: "Man spricht, Wem nicht zu raten ist, dem ist nicht zu helfen. Wir Deutschen haben nu vil jar her das liebe wort Gottes gehoert Da durch uns Gott der Vater alle barmhertzigkeit erleuchtet und von den grewlichen geweln der Bepstlichen finsternis und Abgoetterey geruffen in sein heiliges liecht und Reich. Aber wie danckbarlich und ehrlich wir das haben angenommen und gehalten ist schrecklich gnug zu sehen noch heutigen tages. Denn gerade als weren der vorigen Suende zu wenig da wir Gott mit Messen, Fegfeuer, Heiligen dienst und andere mehr eigen Wercken und gerechtigkeit auff's hoechst (wie wol unwissend) erzuernet und alle winkel mit solchen grossen Abgoettereien erfuellet haben, und gemeinet, Gott darin sonderlich zu dienen, So faren wir darueber zu und verfolgen das liebe wort, so uns zur Busse von solchen greweln berufft, und verteidigen wissentlich und mutwilliglich solche Abgoetterey mit Fewr, Wasser, Strick, Schwert, Fluechen und lestern, das nicht wunder were, ob Gott nicht allein Tuerken, sondern eitel Teuffel uber Deutschland liesse oder lengst hette lassen schwemmen."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, LI, 586, 29: "Uber das auff diesen teil wir, so das Evangelion angenommen und sich des worts rhuemen, erfuellet auch den spruch Rom. 2: 'Gottes Namen wird durch euch unter den Heiden gelestert'. Denn ausgenommen gar wenig, die es mit ernst meinen und dankbarlich annemen, So ist der andere hauffe so undanckbar, so mutwillig, so frech, so leben nicht anders, denn als hette Gott sein Wort darumb uns gegeben, und vom Bapstum sampt seinem Teuffelischen gefengnis erloeset, das wir moechten frey thun und lassen, was uns gueset, Und also sein Wort nicht zu seinen ehren und unser seligkeit, sondern zu unserm mitwillen dienen muesste, So es doch seines lieben Sons Jhesu Christi unsers Herrn und Heilands, blut und tod gekostet hat, das uns solchs so reichlich gepredigt wuerde."

repent and to acknowledge their transgressions. Luther said, "This struggle has to be started with repentance, and we have to change our very being, otherwise we shall fight in vain."³¹ And later: "If we want to receive help and counsel, we must first of all repent and change all the evil practices which I mentioned above. Princes and lords must preserve law and do justice, bring an end to money lending, and stop the greed of noblemen, burghers and peasants — but most of all honor the Word of God and care for the schools and churches and their ministers and teachers."³²

Luther felt that the people needed to learn that only through faithful prayer could the Turkish danger be banished. He said, "Pray ye, because our hope rests not in weapons but in God. If anyone is able to defeat the Turk, it will be the poor little children praying the Lord's Prayer."³³

But just as repentance and prayer are the tasks of all men as Christians, so these same Christian men have an additional task as citizens. And here again Luther presented the task of the Christian from two different aspects.³⁴ The Christian as ruler has the duty to resist the Turks.

After the amazing victories of the Turkish armies, many voices could be heard all over Germany proclaiming that the time for fighting the enemy had passed and that the time for appeasing him had come. What's the difference? they said, Germany is doomed; Mohammedanism is the wave of the future. Resistance is hopeless. Many people were resigned to become subjects of the Sultan. Some even hoped for an improvement of their position once the Turks should take over. Against these appeasers Luther said: "We must not despair. For just as God does not want us to be blown up in our conceited self-confidence, He does not want us to give up in despair."³⁵ Luther made it quite plain that it would

³¹ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 117, 21.

³² *Ibid.*, LI, 594, 12.

³³ *Ibid.*, T. V., 127, 1.

³⁴ Cf. Lamparter, *Luthers Stellung zum Tuerkenkrieg*, 68ff.

³⁵ *Luthers Werke*, LI, 593, 20: "Hie sprichstu: Was sollen wir denn thun? Sollen wir verzweiveln, hende und fuesse gehen lassen, und dem Tuercken alles einreumen on allen widerstand und gegenwehre? Nein, bey leibe, Des habe ich keinen befelch zu raten, Sonerlich nicht, das man verzagen oder verzweivelen solle, denn gleich wie Gott nicht kan leiden den frechen frevel und mutwillen, davon ich droben gesagt, Also wil er auch nicht, das man verzagen oder verzweivelen solle."

show utter irresponsibility if the Emperor and the princes should give in to the Turk without a fight. It is the task of the princes and rulers to protect their citizens against all enemies. That is the reason that God has given them power. If they fail in their task, they sin against God.³⁶

But the duty to fight the Turks in defense of Germany and Europe does not mean that the war against the Turk is a crusade or a holy war. Luther knew the desires of the Papacy to promote crusades. But he considered the very idea of a crusade utter blasphemy. The champions of crusades always implied that they were defending Christ against the devil. The spirit of the crusade was therefore a spirit of pride. Luther considered such a spirit contrary to Christ's spirit of humility and love. The war against the Turks could never be called a crusade of Christians against the enemies of Christ. Luther said: "Such a view is opposed to Christ's teaching and name. It is against His teachings since He said that Christians should not resist evil, should not quarrel and fight and should never seek revenge. It is against His name since in such an army there are hardly five real Christians and perhaps many people worse in the sight of God than the Turks. Yet they all want to go by the name of Christians. This is the worst of all sins, a sin that no Turk commits. For here Christ's name is used for sin and unrighteousness."³⁷

Luther ridiculed the idea that the Emperor had to fight a war against the Turks as a protector of the Christian faith and the Christian Church. Only stupid pride and conceit could possibly produce such an idea. Luther said quite plainly, "The Emperor is not the head of Christendom or the defender of the Gospel and of faith. The Christian Church and the Christian faith need a far different protector than an emperor or a king. These men are generally the worst enemies of Christianity and of faith."³⁸

Indeed, Luther said, we would be in a serious predicament if the Christian Church had no other protector than some

³⁶ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 129, 17: "Der ander man so widder den Turcken zu streiten gebuert, ist Keyser Karol (odder wer der Keyser ist). Denn der Turcke greifft seine unterthanen und sein Keysertum an, welcher schuldig ist die seinen zu verteidigen als eine ordentliche Obrigkeit von Gott gesetzt."

³⁷ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 111, 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 130, 27.

worldly prince. No prince is sure of his own life for the space of even one hour. Therefore Luther considered the idea of a human defender of the faith an utterly stupid perversion of the truth. He said: "Here you can see how a poor mortal, a future victim of worms, like the Emperor, who is not sure of his life for even one moment, glorifies himself as the true protector of the Christian faith. Scripture says that Christian faith is a rock, too solid to be overthrown by the might of the devil, by death and all powers, that this faith is a divine power (Rom. 1:16). Such a power should be protected by a child of death who can be put to death by any kind of disease? Help us God, the world is crazy. . . . Well, soon we shall have a king or prince who will protect Christ and then somebody else will protect the Holy Ghost, and then of course, the Holy Trinity and Christ and faith will be in a fine shape!"³⁹

It is not the task of the princes and of the Emperor to play the defender of the Holy Trinity and of the Christian faith, but it is their task to see to it that their subjects are safe from attack. The Emperor is not the protector of the Church and of the faith, but he is the protector of Germany and of its freedom. Let Him be satisfied with that and do his duty.

Now what of the duty of the subjects in the war against the Turks?⁴⁰ First of all, as citizens, they owe obedience to their rulers. They must help the ruler in his task of preserving law and order. Luther had explained before his position in regard to the powers that be. He had spoken of the duty of the citizen as soldier and assured his followers that the professional soldier could also be saved. But now he warned even the subject against participation in a crusade. He said: "If I were a soldier and should see as the flag of my army the colors of a cleric or a cross, even if it were a crucifix, I would run away as if the very devil himself were after me."⁴¹ Luther felt that what was true for the rulers was no less true for the world. Crusades were not only useless but actually blasphemous. No Christian could possibly participate in a crusade. And in this connection Luther added

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XV, 278, 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. Lamparter, *Luthers Stellung zum Tuerkenkrieg*, 97 ff.

⁴¹ *Luthers Werke*, XXX, 2, 115, 1.

that no one who serves as a soldier under an emperor or prince should ever let himself be used in a war against the Gospel, fought under the guise of a crusade but actually persecuting Christians. There is a limit to the obedience which the subject owes to the established order.

However, the soldier who fights for law and order and is a Christian can rest assured of his salvation.⁴² The fact that he is a soldier does not exclude him from Christ, as some of the enthusiasts had held. For this soldier does not fight for his own pleasure but in the service of the ordinances of God. If he is aware of this fact, no one can harm him. Then the fear of death is overcome. If such a soldier dies, believing in Christ, then his death on the battlefield is merely the beginning of his eternal life. And Luther considered such a death on the battlefield preferable to the slow death on the sickbed.⁴³

If war is fought in defense of law and order and of home and family, then a Christian ought to go to war unafraid. Luther said that the war against the Turks is not our business as Christians but it is very much our business as citizens. A Christian citizen we must face all dangers without flinching, for as Christians we know, "And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?"⁴⁴

Luther's attitude toward the war against the Turks is an integral part of his entire theology. It is especially important because of his persistent denial of the right to proclaim a

⁴² Ibid., XXX, 2, 180, 7: "Denn der Tuerck ist ein feind und Tyrann nicht allein widder Christum, sondern auch widder den Keiser und unser oeberkeit. Foddert sie nu die oeberkeit, sollen sie ziehen und drein schmeissen wie gehorsam unterthanen. Werden sie darueber erschlagen, Wolan so sind sie nicht allein Christen, sondern auch gehorsame trewe unterthanen gewesen, die leib und gut ynn Gottes Gehorsam bey yhre oberherrn zugesetzt haben. Selig und heilig sind sie ewiglich wie der fromme Urias."

⁴³ Ibid., XXX, 2, 175, 28: "So weistu ia wol, das du dennoch ein mal sterben must und keinen tag noch stunde des todes sicher bist. Wie wenn denn solcher streit widder den Tuercken eben dein stuendlein sein solt und von Gott also verordent were? Solltestu nicht lieber, ia dazu mit freuden, dich allda Gott ergeben ynn einen solchen ehrlichen heiligen todt, da du so viel Goettlicher ursachen, gebot und befehl hast und sicher bist, das du nicht ynn deinen sunden, sondern ynn Gottes gebot und gehorsam stirbest, vielleicht ynn einem augenblick aus allem iammer kommst und gen hymel zu Christo auffleugst, denn das du auff dem bette muestest liggen und dich lange mit deinen sunden, mit dem tod und teuffel reissen, beissen, kempffen und ringen ynn aller fahr und not, und dennoch solche herrliche Gottes befehl und gebot nicht haben?"

⁴⁴ Ibid., XXX, 2, 177, 2.

war, even a religious war, or a crusade. But we cannot fully understand Luther's position on the war against the Turks unless we realize that for Luther there was also an eschatological element involved in this war.

Luther had tried to understand the Turkish danger in the light of the Book of Daniel. On the basis of his exegesis of Daniel, the Turk was for him an indication of the proximity of the *parousia*. The raging of the Antichrist in Turk and Pope made Luther hope that the Day of the Lord was at hand. The troubles of his time represented the birthpangs of the coming Kingdom. This confident hope was the reason that Luther left the ultimate defeat of Turk and Pope to the day of Jesus Christ that was soon to dawn. He said: "Our self-confidence will not defeat Gog.⁴⁵ . . . But thunder and lightning and the fire of hell will defeat him, as it once happened to Sennacherib. That will be his judgment and his end. For this judgment Christians must work with humble prayer. . . . If they don't do it, no one else will."⁴⁶

To encourage Christians in their prayers and devotions, the Gospel had appeared again in its clarity. This Gospel and prayer were the weapons in the hands of Christian people. The end was at hand. Soon Christ would bring His judgment upon both the Pope and the Turk, rid the world of the Antichrist, and save us all with His glorious future. And Luther added that for this Day of Christ we wait daily.⁴⁷

Luther knew that finally Antichrist, in whatever form he might appear, would be judged. But he knew also that this judgment would be God's judgment.⁴⁸ It is our task to do what we can to hasten this day of Jesus Christ. We can do it only with repentance and prayer and a life according to His Word.

This is the core of Luther's teachings about the Turks. He was concerned with the Turkish danger most of his life.

⁴⁵ For Luther the Turk is Gog. He developed this idea in his preface to the 38th and 39th chapter of Ezekiel. Cf. *Luthers Werke*, XXX, 2, 223 ff.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 226, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 226, 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, XXX, 2, 172, 9: "Eben wenn das selb stuendlin kommen wird, das er so viel noch thun will und trotzig und gyrig sein wird, Da wird Christus mit schwefel und feur uber yhn komen und fragen waruemb er seine heiligen, die yhm kein leid gethan, on alle ursache so gewilich verfolget und geplaget habe."

The Turks played a part in his first teachings as well as in his last. But with an amazing consistency Luther never changed his basic attitude. The Turks were God's punishment of a proud and sinful Germany in 1541 as in 1517. Never did the political exigencies of the time change Luther's statements concerning these enemies.

Because Luther knew that the hope of the Christian is based solely upon the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, he concluded his booklet *On War Against the Turks* with these words: "I know that this book will not make the Turk a gracious lord to me, if it comes before him; nevertheless, I have wished to tell my Germans the truth, so far as I know it, and give faithful counsel and service to the grateful and ungrateful alike. If it helps, it helps; if it helps not, then may our dear Lord Jesus Christ help, and come down from heaven with the Last Judgment and smite both Turk and Pope to the earth, together with all tyrants and all the godless, and deliver us from all sins and from all evil."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia), V, 123.

