

Martin Luther
On war against the Turk, 1528
(Vom Kriege wider die Türken, 1528)

(WA 30 II, 107-148)

Luther's Preface

Count of Katzenellenbogen, Ziegenhain and Nidda, My gracious lord.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Serene, highborn Prince, gracious Lord.

Certain persons have been begging me for the past five years to write about war against the Turks, and encourage our people and stir them up to it, and now that the Turk is actually approaching, my friends are compelling me to do this duty, especially since there are some stupid preachers among us Germans (as I am sorry to hear) who are making the people believe that we ought not and must not fight against the Turks. Some are even so crazy as to say that it is not proper for Christians to bear the temporal sword or to be rulers; also because our German people are such a wild and uncivilized folk that there are some who want the Turk to come and rule. All the blame for this wicked error among the people is laid on Luther and must be called "the fruit of my Gospel," just as I must bear the blame for the rebellion, and for everything bad that happens anywhere in the world.

My accusers know better, but God and His Word to the contrary, they pretend not to know better, and seek occasion to speak evil of the Holy Ghost and of the truth that is openly confessed, so that they may earn the reward of hell and never receive repentance or the forgiveness of their sins.

Therefore it is necessary for me to write of these things for my own sake and the Gospel's sake and to enter our defense; not because of the blasphemers, however. They are not good enough to make it worthwhile to say a single word of defense to them, for to them the Gospel must always be a stench and a savor of death unto death, as they have deserved by their willful blasphemy. But I must write in order that innocent consciences may not any longer be deceived by these slandermongers, and made suspicious of me or my doctrine, and may not be deceived into believing that we must not fight against the Turks. I have thought best to publish this little book under the name of your Grace, who are a famous and mighty prince, so that it may be the better received and the more diligently read. Thus, if it came to a discussion of a campaign against the Turks, the princes and lords would readily recall it. I commend your Grace to our merciful God's grace and favor, that He may keep your Grace against all error and against the craft of the devil, and illumine and strengthen your Grace for a blessed reign.
Your Grace's devoted Martin Luther Wittenberg, October 9, 1528

The two kingdoms

Pope Leo the Tenth, in the bull in which he put me under the ban, condemned, among other statements, the following one. I had said that “to fight against the Turk is the same thing as resisting God, who visits our sin upon us with this rod.” From this article they may get it, who say that I prevent and dissuade from war against the Turk. I still confess freely that this article is mine and that I put it forth and defended it at the time; and if things in the world were in the same state now that they were in then, I would still have to put it forth and defend it. But it is not fair to forget how things then stood in the world, and what my grounds and reasons were, and still keep my words and apply them to another situation where those grounds and reasons do not exist. With this kind of art, who could not make the Gospel a pack of lies or pretend that it contradicted itself?

This was the state of things at that time – no one had taught, no one had heard, and no one knew anything about temporal government, whence it came, what its office and work was, or how it ought to serve God. The most learned men (I shall not name them) held temporal government for a heathen, human, ungodly thing, as though it were perilous to salvation to be in the ranks of the rulers. Therefore, the priests and monks had so driven kings and princes into the corner, as to persuade them that, to serve God, they must undertake other works, such as hearing mass, saying prayers, endowing masses, etc. In a word, princes and lords who wanted to be pious men held their rank and office as of no value and did not consider it a service of God. They became really priests and monks, except that they did not wear tonsures and cowls. If they would serve God, they must go to church. All the lords then living would have to testify to this, for they knew it by experience. My gracious lord, Duke Frederick, of blessed memory, was so glad when I first wrote *On Temporal Government*, that he had the little book copied out and put in a special binding, and was happy that he could see what his position was before God.

Thus the pope and the clergy were, at that time, all in all, over all, and through all, like God in the world, and the temporal rulers were in darkness, oppressed and unknown. But the pope and his crowd wanted to be Christians, too, and therefore pretended to make war on the Turk. Over those two points the discussion arose, for I was then working on doctrine that concerned Christians and the conscience, and had as yet written nothing about the temporal rulers. The papists, therefore, called me a flatterer of the princes, because I was dealing only with the spiritual class, and not with the temporal; just as they call me seditious, now that I have written in such glorification of temporal government as no teacher has done since the days of the apostles, except, perhaps, St. Augustine. Of this I can boast with a good conscience and the testimony of the world will support me.

Counsels or binding commands

Among the points of Christian doctrine, I discussed what Christ says, in Matthew, viz., that a Christian shall not resist evil, but endure all things, let the coat go and the cloak, let them be taken from him, offer the other cheek, etc. Of this the pope, with his universities

and cloister-schools, had made “an advice,” not a commandment, and not a rule that a Christian must keep; thus they had perverted Christ’s word, spread false doctrine throughout the world, and deceived Christians. Since, therefore, they wanted to be Christians, nay, the best Christians in the world, and yet fight against the Turk, endure no evil, and suffer neither compulsion nor wrong, I opposed them with this saying of Christ that Christians shall not resist evil, but suffer all things and let all things go. Upon this I based the article that Pope Leo condemned. He did it the more gladly because I took the rogue’s-cloak off the Roman knavery.

For the popes had never seriously intended to make war on the Turk, but used the Turkish war as a conjurer’s hat, playing around in it, and robbing Germany of money by means of indulgences, whenever they took the notion. All the world knew it, but now it is forgotten. Thus they condemned my article not because it prevented the Turkish war, but because it tore off this conjurer’s hat and blocked the path along which the money went to Rome. If they had seriously wished to fight against the Turk, the pope and the cardinals would have had enough from the pallia, annates, and other unmentionable sources of income, so that they would not have needed to practice such extortion and robbery in Germany. If there had been a general opinion that a serious war was at hand, I could have dressed my article up better and made some distinctions.

It did not please me, either, that the Christians and the princes were driven, urged, and irritated into attacking the Turk and making war on him, before they amended their own ways and lived like true Christians. These two points, or either separately, were enough reason to dissuade from war. For I shall never advise a heathen or a Turk, let alone a Christian, to attack another or begin war. That is nothing else than advising bloodshed and destruction, and it brings no good fortune in the end, as I have written in the book *On Soldiers*; and it never does any good when one knave punishes another without first becoming good himself.

Misuse of the Christian name

But what moved me most of all was this. They undertook to fight against the Turk under the name of Christ, and taught men and stirred them up to do this, as though our people were an army of Christians against the Turks, who were enemies of Christ; and this is straight against Christ’s doctrine and name. It is against His doctrine, because He says that Christians shall not resist evil, shall not fight or quarrel, not take revenge or insist on rights. It is against His name, because in such an army there are scarcely five Christians, and perhaps worse people in the eyes of God than are the Turks; and yet they would all bear the name of Christ. This is the greatest of all sins and one that no Turk commits, for Christ’s name is used for sin and shame and thus dishonored. This would be especially so if the pope and the bishops were in the war, for they would put the greatest shame and dishonor on Christ’s name, since they are called to fight against the devil with the Word of God and with prayer, and would be deserting their calling and office and fighting with the sword against flesh and blood. This they are not commanded, but forbidden to do.

O how gladly would Christ receive me at the Last Judgment, if when summoned to the spiritual office, to preach and care for souls, I had left it and busied myself with fighting and with the temporal sword! And how should Christ come to it that He or His have anything to do with the sword and go to war, and kill men's bodies, when He glories in it that He has come to save the world, not to kill people? For His work is to deal with the Gospel and by His Spirit to redeem men from sin and death, nay, to help them from this world to everlasting life. According to John 6:15, He fled and would not let Himself be made king; before Pilate He confessed, "My kingdom is not of this world"; and He bade Peter, in the garden, put up his sword, and said, "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword."

I say this not because I would teach that worldly rulers ought not be Christians, or that a Christian cannot bear the sword and serve God in temporal government. Would God they were all Christians, or that no one could be a prince unless he were a Christian! Things would be better than they now are and the Turk would not be so powerful. But what I would do is keep the callings and offices distinct and apart, so that everyone can see to what he is called, and fulfill the duties of his office faithfully and with the heart, in the service of God. Of this I have written more than enough elsewhere, especially in the books *On Soldiers* and *On Temporal Government*. For Paul will not suffer it that in the Church, where all should be Christians, one assume another's office (Romans 12:4 and Corinthians 12:15), but exhorts every member to his own work, so that no disorder arise, but everything be done in an orderly way. How much less, then, is the disorder to be tolerated that arises when a Christian leaves his office and takes upon him a temporal office, or when a bishop or pastor leaves his office and takes upon him the office of a prince or judge; or, on the other hand, when a prince takes up the office of a bishop and lets his princely office go? Even today this shameful disorder rages and rules in the whole papacy, contrary to their own canons and laws.

Inquire of experience how well we have succeeded hitherto with the Turkish war, though we have fought as Christians until we have lost Rhodes and almost all of Hungary and much German land besides. And that we may perceive clearly that God is not with us in our war against the Turks, He has never put so much courage or spirit into the minds of our princes that they have been able even once to deal seriously with the Turkish war. Though many of the diets, almost all of them in fact, have been called and held on this account, the matter will neither be settled nor arranged, and it seems as though God were mocking our diets and letting the devil hinder them and get the better of them until the Turk comes ravaging on at his leisure and ruins Germany without trouble and without resistance. Why does this happen? Because my article, which Pope Leo condemned, remains uncondemned and in full force. Because the papists reject it, arbitrarily and without Scripture, the Turk must take its part and prove it with the fist and with deeds. If we will not learn out of the Scriptures, we must learn out of the Turk's scabbard, until we find in our hurt that Christians are not to make war or resist evil. Fools must be chased with clubs.

Confusion of Christianity and politics

How many wars, think you, have there been against the Turk in which we would not have received heavy losses, if the bishops and clergy were there? How pitifully the fine king Lassla, with his bishops was beaten by the Turk at Varna. The Hungarians themselves blamed Cardinal Julian and killed him for it. Recently King Ludwig would perhaps have fought with more success, if he had not led a priests' army or, as they call it, a Christian army against the Turks. If I were emperor, king, or prince in a campaign against the Turk, I would exhort my bishops and priests to stay at home and mind the duties of their office, praying, fasting, saying mass, preaching, and caring for the poor, as not only Holy Scripture, but their own canon law teaches and requires. If, however, they were to be disobedient to God and their own law and desire to go along to war, I would teach them by force to attend to their office and not, by their disobedience, put me and my army under God's wrath and into danger. It would be less harmful to have three devils in the army than one disobedient, apostate bishop, who had forgotten his office and assumed that of another. For there can be no good fortune with such people around, who go against God and their own law.

I have heard of fine soldiers who have thought that the king of France, when he was defeated and captured by the emperor before Pavia, had all of his bad fortune because he had the pope's, or as they boastfully call them, the Church's, people with him. For after they came to his camp with a great cry of Ecclesia, ecclesia! "Church, Church!" there was no more good fortune there. This is what the soldiers say, though perhaps they do not know the reason for it, viz., that is not right for the pope, who wants to be a Christian, and the highest and best Christian preacher at that, to lead a church army, or army of Christians. For the Church ought not strive or fight with the sword; it has other enemies than flesh and blood, their name is the wicked devils in the air; therefore it has other weapons and swords and other wars, so that it has enough to do, and cannot mix in the wars of the emperor or princes, for the Scriptures say that there shall be no good fortune where men are disobedient to God.

Again, if I were a soldier and saw in the field a priests' banner, or banner of the cross, even though it were a crucifix I should run as though the devil were chasing me; and even if they won a victory, by God's decree, I should not take any part in the booty or the rejoicing. Even the wicked iron-eater, Pope Julius, who was half devil, did not succeed, but had to call at last on the Emperor Maximilian and let him take charge of the game, despite the fact that Julius had more money, arms, and people. I think, too, that this latest pope, Clement, whom people held almost a god of war, succeeded well with his fighting until he lost Rome and all its wealth to a few ill-armed soldiers. The conclusion is this: Christ will teach them to understand my article, that Christians shall not make war, and the condemned article must take its revenge, for it is said of Christians and will be uncondemned and right and true; although they do not care and do not believe it, but rush on more and more, hardened and unrepentant, and go to destruction. To this I say Amen, Amen.

It is true, indeed, that since they have temporal lordship and wealth, they ought to make out of it the same contributions to the emperor, kings, or princes that other holdings properly make, and render the same services that others are expected to render. Nay, these “goods of the Church,” as they call them, ought above all others to serve and help in the protection of the needy and the welfare of all classes, for they are given for that purpose, not in order that a bishop may forget his office and use them for war or battle. If the banner of Emperor Charles or of a prince is in the field, then let everyone run boldly and gladly to the banner to which his allegiance is sworn; but if the banner of a bishop, cardinal, or pope is there, then run the other way, and say “I do not know this coin; if it were a prayer book, or the Holy Scriptures preached in the Church, I would rally to it.”

Facing two fronts

Now before I exhort or urge to war against the Turk, hear me, for God’s sake, while I first teach you how to fight with a good conscience. For although, if I wanted to give way to the old Adam, I could keep quiet and look on while the Turk revenged me upon the tyrants who persecute the Gospel and subject me to all kinds of pain, and paid them back for it, nevertheless, I shall not do this, but rather serve both friends and enemies, so that my sun may rise on both bad and good, and my rain fall on the thankful and unthankful.

In the first place, it is certain that the Turk has no right or command to begin war and to attack lands that are not his. Therefore, his war is nothing else than outrage and robbery, with which God is punishing the world, as He often does through wicked knaves, and sometimes through godly people. For he does not fight from necessity or to protect his land in peace, as the right kind of a ruler does, but like a pirate or highwayman, he seeks to rob and damage other lands, who are doing and have done nothing to him. He is God’s rod and the devil’s servant; there is no doubt about that.

In the second place, it must be known that the man, whoever he is, who is going to make war against the Turk, must be sure that he has a commission from God and is doing right. He must not plunge in for the sake of revenge or have some other mad notion or reason. He must be sure of this, so that, win or lose, he may be in a state of salvation and in a godly occupation.

There are two of these men, and there ought to be only two: the one is named Christian, the other Emperor Charles.

The first front – penance and prayer

Christian should be first, with his army. For since the Turk is the rod of the wrath of the Lord our God and the servant of the raging devil, the first thing to be done is to smite the devil, his lord, and take the rod out of God’s hand, so that the Turk may be found in his own strength only, all by himself, without the devil’s help and without God’s hand. This should be done by Sir Christian, that is, the pious, holy, dear body of Christians. They are

the people who have the arms for this war and know what to do with them. If the Turk's god, the devil, is not first beaten, there is reason to fear that the Turk will not be so easy to beat. Now the devil is a spirit, who cannot be beaten with armor, guns, horses, and men, and God's wrath cannot be allayed by them, as it is written in Psalm 33:17 - 18, "The Lord hath no pleasure in the strength of the horse, neither delighteth he in any man's legs; the Lord delighteth in them that fear him and wait for his goodness." Christian weapons and power must do it.

Here you ask, "Who are the Christians and where does one find them?" Answer: They are not many, but they are everywhere, though they are spread out thin and live far apart, under good and bad princes. Christendom must continue to the end, as the article of the Creed says, "I believe one holy Christian Church." But if that is true, it must be possible to find them. Every pastor and preacher ought to exhort his people most diligently to repentance and to prayer. They ought to drive men to repentance by showing our great and numberless sins and our ingratitude, by which we have earned God's wrath and disfavor, so that He justly gives us into the hands of the devil and the Turk. That this preaching may work the more strongly, they ought to cite examples and sayings out of the Scriptures, such as the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the children of Israel, and show how cruelly and how often God punished the world, and its lands and peoples; and they ought to make it plain that it is no wonder, since we sin more heavily than they did, if we are punished worse than they.

Instructions for penance and prayer

Verily, this fight must be begun with repentance, and we must reform our lives, or we shall fight in vain; as the prophet Jeremiah says in the chapter, "I will speak at one time against a kingdom to pluck it up, destroy it, and scatter it; but if that people against which I speak repent, I will repent me of the evil that I thought to do it; again I speak of a kingdom and people to plant and build it, but if it do evil in my sight, and hear not my voice, I will repent me of the good that I had said I would do it.

Therefore, speak to them of Judah and them of Jerusalem, and say, Behold I prepare a calamity for you and think evil against you; let each of you, then, turn from his evil way and make your deeds good." This saying we may apply to ourselves as though it had been spoken to us, for God devises an evil against us because of our wickedness and certainly prepares the Turk against us, as He says also in Psalm 7:12, "If a man turn not, he hath whetted his sword and stretched his bow, and aimed it, and laid a deadly bolt in it."

Along with these must be cited the words and illustrations of Scripture in which God makes it known how well He is pleased with true repentance or amendment, made in faith and reliance on His Word – such as, in the Old Testament the examples of Kings David, Ahab, Manasseh, and the like; in the New Testament of St. Peter, the malefactor, the publican in the Gospel, and so forth. Although I know that to the scholars and saints, who need no repentance, this advice of mine will be laughable and that they hold it for a simple and common thing which they have long since got beyond; nevertheless, I have

not been willing to omit for the sake of myself and sinners like myself, who need both repentance and exhortation to repentance every day. In spite of it, we remain all too lazy and lax, and have not, with those “ninety and nine just persons,” got so far over the hill as they permit themselves to think they have.

After people have been thus taught and exhorted to confess their sin and amend their ways, they should then be exhorted with the utmost diligence to prayer, and shown how such prayer pleases God, how He has commanded it and promised to hear it, and that no one ought to think lightly of his own praying, or have doubts about it, but be sure, with firm faith, that it will be heard; all of which has been published by us in many tracts. For the man who doubts, or prays at a venture, would do better to let it alone, because such prayer is merely a tempting of God and only makes things worse. Therefore, I would advise against processions, f112 which are a heathenish and useless practice, for they are pomp and show rather than prayer. It might, indeed, be of some use to have the people, especially the young people, sing the Litany at mass or vespers or in the church after the sermon, provided that everyone, at home, by himself, constantly raised to Christ at least a sigh of the heart for grace to lead a better life and for help against the Turk. I am not speaking of much long praying, but of frequent brief sighs, in one or two words, such as “O help us, dear God the Father; have mercy on us, dear Lord Jesus Christ!” or the like.

Lo, this kind of preaching will strike the Christians and find them out, and there will be Christians who will accept it and act according to it; it matters not if you do not know who they are. The tyrants and bishops may also be exhorted to desist from their raging and persecution against the Word of God and not to hinder our prayer; but if they do not desist, we must not cease to pray, but keep on, and take the chance that they will have the benefit of our prayer and be preserved along with us, or that we shall pay for their raging and be ruined along with them. They are so perverse and blind that if God gave good fortune against the Turk, they would ascribe it to their holiness and merit and boast of it against us. On the other hand, if things turned out badly, they would ascribe it to no one but us, and lay the blame on us, disregarding the shameful, openly sinful, and wicked life, which they not only lead, but defend; for they cannot teach rightly a single point about the way to pray, and they are worse than the Turks. Ah, well. We must leave that to God’s judgment!

In this exhortation to prayer, also, we must introduce sayings and examples from the Scriptures, in which it is shown how strong and mighty a man’s prayer has sometimes been; for example, Elijah’s prayer, which St. James praises; the prayers of Elisha and other prophets; of Kings David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jesis, Hezekiah, etc.; the story of how God promised Abraham that He would spare the land of Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of five righteous men; for the prayer of righteous men can do much if it be persistent, says St. James in his Epistle. They are to be informed, besides, that they shall be careful not to anger God by not praying, and not to fall under His judgment, in Ezekiel 13:5, where God says, “Ye have not set yourselves against me, and opposed yourselves as a wall before the house of Israel, to stand against the battle in the day of the Lord”; and in Ezekiel 22, “I sought a man among them who would be a wall,

and stand against me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I poured my wrath upon them and consumed them with the fire of my anger and paid them as they deserved, saith the Lord.”

Penance and prayer against Gods wrath

From this it is easy to see that God would have men set themselves in the way of his wrath and keep it off, and that He is greatly angered if this is not done. That is what I meant when I spoke above about taking the rod out of God’s hands. Let him fast who will. Let him go down on his knees and bow and fall to the ground, if he is in earnest; for the bowing and kneeling that has been practiced hitherto in the chapters and monasteries was not in earnest; it was, and still is, mere apery. It is not for nothing that I exhort pastors and preachers to impress this upon the people, for I see plainly that it rests entirely with the preachers whether the people shall amend their ways and pray, or not. Little will be accomplished by preaching in which men call Luther names and blaspheme, and let repentance and prayer alone; but where God’s Word is spoken, it is not without fruit. They, however, must preach as though they were preaching to saints who had learned all that there was to know about repentance and faith, and therefore had to talk about something higher.

We should have been moved to this prayer against the Turk by the great need of our time, for the Turk, as has been said, is the servant of the devil, who not only ruins land and people with the sword, as we shall hear later, but also lays waste the Christian Faith and our dear Lord Jesus Christ. For although some praise his government because he allows everyone to believe what he will so long as he remains the temporal lord, yet this praise is not true, for he does not allow Christians to come together in public, and no one can openly confess Christ or preach or teach against Mohammed.

What kind of freedom of belief is it when no one is allowed to preach or confess Christ, and yet our salvation depends on that confession as Paul says, “To confess with the lips saves,” and Christ has strictly commanded to confess and teach His Gospel.

Since, therefore, faith must be kept quiet and held secret among this barbarous and wild people and under this severe rule, how can it at last exist or remain, when there is need for so much trouble and labor, in places where it is preached most faithfully and diligently? Therefore, it happens, and must happen, that those Christians who are captured or otherwise get into Turkey fall away and become altogether Turkish, and it is very seldom that one remains true to his faith, for they lack the living bread of souls and see the free and fleshly life of the Turks and are obliged to adapt themselves to it.

How can one injure Christ more than with these two things; namely, force and wiles? With force, they prevent preaching and suppress the Word.

With wiles, they daily put wicked and dangerous examples before men’s eyes and draw men to them. If we then would not lose our Lord Jesus Christ, His Word and faith,

we must pray against the Turks as against other enemies of our salvation and of all good. Nay, as we pray against the devil himself.

Islam – the faith of the Muslims

In this connection, the people should be told of all the dissolute life and ways that the Turk practices, so that they may the better feel the need of prayer. To be sure, it has often disgusted me and still does, that neither our great lords nor our scholars have been at any pains to give us any certain knowledge about the life of the Turks in the two classes, spiritual and temporal; and yet he has come so near to us. For it is said that they too have chapters and monasteries. Some indeed have invented outrageous lies about the Turks in order to stir up us Germans against them, but there is no need for lies; the truth is all too great. I will tell my dear Christians a few things, so far as I know the real truth, so that they may the better be moved and stirred up to pray earnestly against the enemy of Christ our Lord.

I have some pieces of Mohammed's Koran which might be called in German a book of sermons or doctrines of the kind that we call pope's decretals. When I have time, I must put it into German so that every man may see what a foul and shameful book it is. f116 In the first place, he praises Christ and Mary very much as those who alone were without sin, and yet he believes nothing more of Christ than that he is a holy prophet, like Jeremiah or Jonah, and denies that he is God's Son and true God. Besides, he does not believe that Christ is the Savior of the world, Who died for our sins, but that He preached to His own time, and completed His work before His death, just like any other prophet.

Islam denies Christ

On the other hand, he praises and exalts himself highly and boasts that he has talked with God and the angels, and that since Christ's office of prophet is now complete, it has been commanded to him to bring the world to his faith and if the world is not willing, to compel it or punish it with the sword; and there is much glorification of the sword in it. Therefore, the Turks think their Mohammed much higher and greater than Christ, for the office of Christ has ended and Mohammed's office is still in force.

From this anyone can easily observe that Mohammed is a destroyer of our Lord Christ and His kingdom, and if anyone denies concerning Christ, that He is God's Son and has died for us, and still lives and reigns at the right hand of God, what has he left of Christ? Father, Son, Holy Ghost, Baptism, the Sacrament, Gospel, Faith and all Christian doctrine and life are gone, and there is left, instead of Christ, nothing more than Mohammed with his doctrine of works and especially of the sword. That is the chief doctrine of the Turkish faith in which all abominations, all errors, all devils are piled up in one heap.

And yet, the world acts as though it were snoring pupils of the Turkish faith, for it pleases the reason extraordinarily well that Christ should not be God, as the Jews also believe, and especially is Reason pleased with the thought that men are to rule and bear the sword and get up in the world; then the devil pushes it along. Thus a faith is patched together out of the faith of Jews, Christians and heathen. He gets it from the Christians when he praises Christ and Mary and the apostles and other saints. He gets it from the Jews that people are not to drink wine, are to fast the certain times of the year, wash like the Nazarites, and eat off the ground, and go on with such holy works as part of our monks do and hope for everlasting life at the Judgment Day, for, holy people that they are, they believe in the resurrection of the dead, though few of the papists believe in it.

What pious Christian heart would not be horrified at this enemy of Christ, since we see that the Turk allows no article of our faith to stand, except the single one about the resurrection of the dead? Then Christ is no redeemer, savior, or king; there is no forgiveness of sins, no grace, no Holy Ghost.

Why should I say much? In the article that Christ is to be beneath Mohammed, and less than he, everything is destroyed. Who would not rather be dead than live under such a government, where he must say nothing about his Christ, and hear and see such blasphemy and abomination against Him? Yet it takes such a powerful hold, when it wins a land, that people even submit to it willingly. Therefore, let everyone pray who can pray that this abomination may not become lord over us and that we may not be punished with this terrible rod of God's anger.

Islam rules with arms

In the second place, the Turk's Koran, or creed, teaches him to destroy not only the Christian faith, but also the whole temporal government. His Mohammed, as has been said, commands that ruling is to be done by the sword, and in his Koran the sword is the commonest and noblest work.

Thus the Turk is, in truth, nothing but a murderer or highwayman, as his deeds show before men's eyes. St. Augustine calls other kingdoms, too, great robbery; Psalm 76:4 also calls them "fastnesses of robbers," f118 because it is but seldom that an empire has come up except by robbery, force, and wrong; or at the very least, it is often seized and possessed by wicked people without any justice, so that the Scriptures, in Genesis 10:9, call the first prince upon earth, Nimrod, a mighty hunter. But never has any kingdom come up and become so mighty by murder and robbery as that of the Turk; and he murders and robs every day, for it is commanded in their law, as a good and divine work, that they shall rob and murder, devour and destroy more and more those that are round about them; and they do this, and think that they are doing God service. Their government, therefore, is not a regular rulership, like others, for the maintenance of peace, the protection of the good, and the punishment of the wicked, but a rod of anger and a punishment of God upon the unbelieving world, as has been said. The work of murdering and robbing pleases the flesh in any case, because it enables men to gain high

place and subject everyone's life and goods to themselves; how much more must the flesh be pleased when this is a commandment, as though God would have it so and it pleased Him well! Therefore among the Turks, too, they are held the best who are diligent to increase the Turkish kingdom and who are constantly murdering and robbing round about them.

This second thing must follow out of the first; for Christ says, in John 8:44, that the devil is a liar and murderer. With lies he kills souls, with murder bodies. If he wins with a lie, he does not take a holiday and make delay, but follows it up with murder. Thus when the spirit of lies had taken possession of Mohammed and the devil had murdered men's souls with his Koran and had destroyed the faith of Christians, he had to go on and take the sword and attempt the murder of their bodies. The Turkish faith, then, has not made its progress by preaching and the working of miracles, but by the sword and by murder, and its success has been due to God's wrath, which ordered that, since all the world has a desire for the sword and robbery and murder, one should come who would give it enough of murder and robbery.

All fanatics, as a rule, when the spirit of lies has taken possession of them and led them away from the true faith, have been unable to stop there, but have followed the lie with murder and taken up the sword, as a sign that they were children of the father of all lies and murder. Thus we read how the Arians became murderers and one of the greatest bishops of Alexandria, Lucius by name, drove the orthodox out of the city, and went into the ship and held a naked sword in his own hand until the orthodox were all on board and had to go away; and these tender, holy bishops committed many other murders even at that time, which is almost twelve hundred years ago. Again, in the time of St. Augustine, which is almost eleven hundred years ago, the holy father shows, in his books, how many murders were committed by the Donatists. In such an utterly worldly way did the clergy conduct themselves! They had only the name and guise of bishops among the Christians; but because they had fallen away from the truth and become subject to the spirit of lies, they had to go forward in his service and become wolves and murderers. Even in our own times, what was Muenzer seeking, except to become a new Turkish emperor? He was possessed of the spirit of lies and therefore there was no holding him back; he had to go at the other work of the devil, take the sword and murder and rob, as the spirit of murder drove him, and he created such a rebellion and such misery.

Muhammad and the pope are tied together

And what shall I say of the most Holy Father, the pope? Is it not true that he and his bishops have become worldly lords, have fallen away from the Gospel, led by the spirit of lies, and embraced their own human doctrine, and thus have practiced murder, down to the present hour? Read the histories of the time and you find that the principal business of popes and bishops has been to set emperors, kings, princes, lands, and people against one another, even themselves to fight and help in the work of murder and bloodshed. Why so? Because the spirit of lies never acts any other way.

After he has made his disciples teachers of lies and deceivers, he has no rest until he makes them murderers, robbers, and blood-dogs. For who has ordered them to bear the sword, to make war, and to urge men on and stir them up to murder and war, when their duty was to attend to preaching and prayer?

They call me and mine seditious, but when have I ever coveted the sword or urged men to take it, and not rather taught and kept peace and obedience, except that I have instructed and exhorted the regular temporal rulers to do their duty and maintain peace and justice? By its fruits one shall know the tree. I and mine keep and teach peace; the pope, with his followers, makes war, murders, robs, and that not only his enemies; but he burns, condemns, and persecutes the innocent, the pious, the orthodox, as a true Antichrist. For he does this, "sitting in the temple of God," as head of the Church; and that the Turk does not do. But as the pope is Antichrist, so the Turk is the very devil. The prayer of Christendom is against both.

Both shall go down to hell, even though it may take the Last Day to send them there; and I hope it will not be long.

Summing up what has been said: Where the spirit of lies is, there is also the spirit of murder, though he may not get to work or may be hindered. If he is hindered, he still laughs and is jubilant when murder is done, and at least consents to it, for he holds it right. But good Christians do not rejoice over any murder, not even over the misfortunes of their enemies. Since, then, Mohammed's Koran is such a great spirit of lies that it leaves almost nothing of Christian truth remaining, how could it have any other result than that it should become a great and mighty murderer, with both lies and murders under the show of truth and righteousness. As, therefore, lies destroy the spiritual order of faith and truth, so murder destroys all temporal order instituted by God; for where murder and robbery are practiced, it is impossible that there should be a fine, praiseworthy temporal government, since they cannot think more highly of peace than of war and murder, or attend to the pursuits of peace, as one can see in soldiers. Therefore, the Turks do not regard the work of agriculture highly.

Islam despises women and marriage

The third point is that Mohammed's Koran thinks nothing of marriage, but permits everyone to take wives as he will. Therefore, it is customary among the Turks for one man to have ten or twenty wives and to desert or sell any of them that he will, when he will, so that in Turkey women are held immeasurably cheap and are despised; they are bought and sold like cattle. Although there may be some few who do not take advantage of this law, nevertheless this is the law and anyone can follow if he will. Such a way of living is not marriage and cannot be marriage, because none of them takes a wife or has a wife with the intention of staying with her forever, as though the two were one body, as God's Word says, in Genesis 2:24, "The man shall cleave to his wife and they two be one body."

Thus the marriage of the Turks closely resembles the chaste life that the soldiers live with their harlots; for the Turks are soldiers and must act like soldiers; Mars and Venus, say the poets, must be together.

Some Muslims are all right

These three points I have wanted to mention. I am sure of them from the Koran of the Turks. What I have heard beside I will not bring forward, because I cannot be sure about it. Suppose, then, that there are some Christians among the Turks; suppose that some of them are monks; suppose that some are honorable laymen; even then, what good can there be in the government and the whole Turkish way of life, when according to their Koran these three things rule among them; namely, lying, murder, and disregard of marriage, and besides, everyone must keep Christian truth quiet and dare not rebuke or try to reform these three points, but must look on and consent to them, as I fear, at least so far as to be silent? How can there be a more horrible, dangerous, terrible imprisonment than a life under such a government? Lies destroy the spiritual estate, murder the temporal, disregard of marriage the estate of matrimony. Now take out of the world veram religionem, veram politiam, veram oeconomiam, i.e., true spiritual life, true temporal government, and true conduct of the home; what is left in the world, but flesh, world and devil? A life there is like the life of the “good fellows” who keep house with harlots.

It is said, indeed, that the Turks are, among themselves, faithful and friendly and careful to tell the truth. I believe that, and I think that they probably have more fine virtues in them than that. No man is so bad that there is not something good in him. Now and then a woman of the streets has good qualities that scarcely ten honorable matrons have. So the devil would have a cloak and be a fair angel, an angel of light; therefore he hides behind certain works, that are works of the light. Murderers and robbers are more faithful and friendly to each other than neighbors are, nay, more so than many Christians. For if the devil keeps the three things – lies, murder, and disregard of marriage – as the real foundation of hell, he can easily tolerate, nay, help, that fleshly love and faithfulness shall be built upon it, as precious stones (though they are nothing but hay and straw), though he knows well that nothing of them will remain through the fire. f123 On the other hand, where true faith, true government, true marriage are, he tries earnestly that little love and fidelity may appear and little be shown, so that he can put the foundation to shame and have it despised.

What is more, when the Turks go into battle their war-cry is no other word than “Allah! Allah!” and they shout it till heaven and earth resound. But in the Arabic language Allah means God, and is a corruption of the Hebrew Eloha. For they have taught in the Koran that they shall boast constantly with these words, “There is no God but God.” All that is really a device of the devil. For what is it to say, “There is no God but God” without distinguishing one God from another? The devil, too, is a god and they honor him with this word; of that there is no doubt. In just the same way the pope’s soldiers cry “Ecclesia! Ecclesia!” To be sure: the devil’s ecclesia! Therefore I believe that

the Turks' Allah does more in war than they themselves. He gives them courage and wiles, guides sword and fist, horse and man. What do you think, then, of the holy people who can call upon God in battle, and yet destroy Christ and all God's words and works, as you have heard?

Prohibition against pictures

It is part of the Turks' holiness, also, that they tolerate no images or pictures and are even holier than our destroyers of images. For our destroyers tolerate, and are glad to have, images on gulden, groschen, rings, and ornaments; but the Turk tolerates none of them and stamps nothing but letters on his coins. He is entirely Muenzerian, too, for he overthrows all rulers and tolerates no gradations of government, such as princes, counts, lords, nobles and other feudatories; but he alone is lord over all in his own land, and what he gives out is only pay, never property or rights of rulership. He is also a papist; for he believes that he will become holy and be saved by works, and thinks it no sin to overthrow Christ, lay government waste, and destroy marriage. All these things the pope also works at, though in other ways, with hypocrisy, while the Turk uses force and the sword. In a word, as has been said, it is the very dregs of all abominations and errors.

All this I have wanted to tell to the first man, namely, the community of Christians, so that he may know and see how much need there is for prayer, and how we must first smite the Turk's Allah, that is, his god, the devil, and strike down his power and godhead; otherwise, I fear, the sword will accomplish little. For this man is not to fight in a bodily way with the Turk, as the pope and his followers teach, nor resist him with the fist, but recognize the Turk as God's rod and anger, which Christians must either suffer, if God visits their sins upon them, or fight against and drive away with repentance, tears, and prayer. He who despises this counsel, let him despise it; I want to see what damage he will do the Turk.

The secular government

The second man whose place it is to fight against the Turk is Emperor Charles, or whoever is emperor; for the Turk attacks his subjects and his empire, and it is his duty, as a regular ruler appointed by God, to defend his own. I repeat it here, that I would not urge anyone or tell anyone to fight against the Turk unless the first method, mentioned above, had been followed, and men had first repented and been reconciled to God, etc. If anyone will go to war besides, let him take his risk. It is not proper for me to say anything more about it beyond telling everyone his duty and instructing his conscience.

I see clearly that kings and princes are taking such a silly and careless attitude toward the Turk that I fear they are despising God and the Turk too greatly, or do not know, perhaps, that the Turk is such a mighty lord that no kingdom or land, whatever it is, is strong enough to resist him alone, unless God will do a miracle. Now I cannot expect any

miracle or special grace of God for Germany, unless men amend their ways and honor the Word of God differently than has hitherto been done.

But enough has been said about that for those who will listen. We would now speak of the emperor.

In the first place, if there is to be war against the Turk, it should be fought at the emperor's command, under his banner, and in his name. Then everyone can assure his own conscience that he is obeying the ordinance of God, since we know that the emperor is our true overlord and head, and he who obeys him, in such a case, obeys God also, while he who disobeys him disobeys God also. If he dies in this obedience, he dies in a good state, and if he has previously repented and believes on Christ, he is saved. These things, I suppose, everyone knows better than I can teach him, and would to God they knew them as well as they think they do. Yet we will say something more about them.

In the second place, this banner and obedience of the emperor ought to be true and simple. The emperor should seek nothing else than simply to perform the work and duty of his office, which is to protect his subjects; and those under his banner should seek simply the work and duty of obedience. By this simplicity you should understand that there is to be no fighting of the Turk for the reasons for which the emperors and princes have heretofore been urged to war, such as the winning of great honor, glory, and wealth, the increasing of lands, or wrath and revengefulness and other things of the kind; for by these things men seek only their own self-interest, and therefore we have had no good fortune heretofore, either in fighting or planning to fight against the Turk.

Therefore the urging and inciting, with which the emperor and the princes have heretofore been stirred up to fight against the Turk, ought to cease.

He has been urged, as head of Christendom, as protector of the Church and defender of the faith, to wipe out the faith of the Turk, and the urging and exhorting have been based on the wickedness and vice of the Turks. Not so! The emperor is not head of Christendom or protector of the Gospel or of the faith. The Church and the faith must have another protector than emperor and kings. They are usually the worst enemies of Christendom and of the faith, as Psalm 2:2 says and the Church constantly laments. With that kind of urging and exhorting things are only made worse and God is the more deeply angered, because that interferes with His honor and His work, and would ascribe it to men, which is idolatry and blasphemy.

The authorities should not interfere in peoples faith

And if the emperor were to destroy the unbelievers and non-Christians, he would have to begin with the pope, bishops, and clergy and perhaps not spare us, or himself; for there is enough horrible idolatry in his own empire to make it unnecessary for him to fight the Turks for this cause. Among us there are Turks, Jews, heathen, non-Christians, all too many of them, proving it with public false doctrine and with offensive, shameful lives.

Let the Turk believe and live as he will, just as one lets the papacy and other false Christians live. The emperor's sword has nothing to do with the faith; it belongs to physical, worldly things, if God is not to become angry with us. If we pervert His order and throw it into confusion, He, too, becomes perverse and throws us into confusion and all misfortune, as it is written, "With the perverse thou art perverse." We can perceive and grasp this by means of the fortune we have heretofore had against the Turk. Think of all the heartbreak and misery that have been caused by the cruciata, by the indulgences and crusading-taxes, with which Christians have been stirred up to take the sword and fight the Turk, when they ought to have been fighting the devil and unbelief with the Word and with prayer.

This is what should be done. The emperor and the princes should be exhorted concerning their office and their bounden duty to give serious and constant thought to governing their subjects in peace and to protecting them against the Turk. This would be their duty whether they themselves were Christians or not, though it would be very good if they were Christians. But since it is uncertain, and remains so, that they are Christians, and it is certain that they are emperors and princes, that is, that they have God's command to protect their subjects and are in duty bound to do so, therefore we must let the uncertain go and hold to the certain, urge them with continual preaching and exhortation, and lay it heavily upon their consciences, that it is their duty to God not to let their subjects be so pitiably ruined, and that they are doing a great and notable sin when they do not think of their office and use all their power to bring counsel and help to those who should live, with body and goods, under their protection and who are bound to them with oaths of homage.

For I think (so far as I have yet observed the matter in our diets) that neither emperor nor princes believe themselves that they are emperor and princes. For they act as though it lay with their own judgment and pleasure whether they would rescue and protect their subjects from the power of the Turk or not; and the princes neither care nor think that they are bound and obligated before God to counsel and help the emperor in this matter with body and goods. Everyone of them lets it go as though it were no affair of his and as though he were forced neither by command or necessity, but it were left to his own free choice to do it or leave it.

Responsible for the authorities continuation

They are just like the common people who do not think it their duty to God and the world, when they have bright sons, to put them to school and have them study; but everyone thinks he has free power to raise his son as he pleases, no matter what God's word and ordinance are. Nay, the councilmen in the cities and almost all the rulers act in the same way, and let the schools go to nothing, as though they had no responsibility for them, and had an indulgence besides. No one remembers that God earnestly commands, and will have it so, that bright children shall be raised to His praise and for His work, which cannot be done without the schools. On the contrary everyone is in a hurry to have his children making a living, as though God and Christendom needed no pastors,

preachers, carers for souls, and the worldly rulers no chancellors, counselors, or secretaries. But of this another time. The pen must remain empress, or God will show us something else.

Emperor, kings, and princes act the same way. They do not consider that God's commandment makes it necessary to protect their subjects; it is to lie in their own free choice to do it, if the notion sometime takes them, or they have leisure for it. Dear fellow, let us all do that! Let none of us look to that which is commanded him and which God orders him to do, but let all our actions and duties be matters of our own free will, and God will give us good fortune and His grace, and we shall be plagued by the Turk here in time, and by the devil yonder in eternity.

Perhaps, then, a worthless prattler – I should say a legate – will come from Rome and exhort the estates of the empire and stir them up against the Turk, telling them how the enemy of the Christian faith has done such great harm to Christendom and that the emperor, as guardian of the Church and defender of the faith, should do so and so; as though they themselves were great friends of the Christian faith! But I say to him: You are a base-born knave, you impotent chatterer! For this way you accomplish nothing except to make the emperor feel that he should do a good Christian work that he is not commanded to do; and that rests with his free choice; his conscience is not touched at all by that, and he is not reminded of the necessary duty, laid upon him by God, but the whole thing is referred to his free will.

This is the way that a legate ought to deal with the estates of the empire at the diet. He should hold God's commandment before them and make of it an unavoidable necessity, and say: "Dear lords, emperor, and princes, if you would be emperor and princes, act as emperor and princes, or the Turk will teach you with God's wrath and disfavor. Germany, or the empire, is given you and committed to you by God, that you may protect, rule, counsel, and help it, and you not only should, but must do this on pain of losing your soul's salvation and God's favor and grace. But now it is evident that none of you takes this seriously, or believes it, but you take your office as a jest, as though it were a mummery of the carnival, for you leave the subjects, whom God has committed to you, to be so wretchedly harassed, taken captive, put to shame, plundered, slain, and sold by the Turk. Do you not think, since God has committed this office to you, and has given you money and people besides for you to do good to them, that He will demand at your hands all the subjects whom you so shamefully deserted, while you danced, reveled, showed off, and gambled? If you seriously believed that you were appointed and ordained of God to be emperor and princes, you would leave your banqueting and rivalry for high places and other unprofitable display for awhile, and consult faithfully how you might discharge your office and fulfill God's commandment and rescue your consciences from all the blood and the misery which the Turk inflicts upon them. For how can God, or any godly heart think otherwise of you than that you hate your subjects or have a secret covenant with the Turk or, at least, hold yourselves for neither emperor nor princes, but for dolls and puppets for children to play with? Otherwise, it would be impossible that your consciences should let you rest, if you seriously held yourselves for overlords appointed by God, and were not to speak and advise together about these

matters differently than you have done heretofore. In this you see that you are constantly becoming Turks to your own subjects. “Nay, you even take up the case of Luther and discuss, in the devil’s name, whether one can eat meat in the fast-times and nuns can take husbands, and things of that kind, which are not committed to you for discussion and about which God has given you no commandment; and meanwhile the serious and strict commandment of God hangs in the smoke, the commandment by which He has appointed you protectors of poor Germany; and you become murderers, betrayers, and blood-dogs to your own good, faithful, obedient subjects, and leave them to the Turk, nay, cast them into his jaws, as a reward for the bodies and money wealth and honor that they stake on you and reach out to you.”

A good orator can here see well what I would like to say, if I were learned in the art of oratory, and what a legate should aim at and expound at the diet, if he would discharge his office honestly and faithfully.

The authorities should protect our body and earthly life

For this reason I said above that Charles, or the emperor should be the man to fight against the Turk, and that the fighting should be done under his banner. “O, that is easy! Everybody knew it long ago. Luther is not telling us anything new, but only worn-out old stuff.” Nay, dear fellow, the emperor must truly see himself with other eyes than heretofore, and you must see his banner with other eyes. You and I are talking about the same emperor and the same banner, but you are not talking about the eyes that I am talking about. You must see on the banner the commandment of God that says, “Protect the good; punish the bad.” Tell me how many there are who can read this on the emperor’s banner, or who seriously believe it. Do you not think that their consciences would terrify them, if they saw this banner and had to own that they were greatly guilty before God on account of their failure to give help and protection to their faithful subjects? Dear fellow, a banner is not simply a piece of silk; there are letters on it, and on him who reads the letters luxury and banqueting should pall.

That it has been regarded heretofore as a mere piece of silk, is easy to prove, for otherwise the emperor would long ago have set it up, the princes would have followed it, and the Turk would not have become so mighty. But because the princes called it with their mouths the emperor’s banner, and were disobedient to it with their fists, and held it by their deeds a mere piece of silk, those things have come to the pass that we now see with our own eyes. God grant that we are not, all of us, too late, I with my exhortation and the lords with their banner; and that it may not happen to us as it did to the children of Israel who would not fight against the Amorites when God first commanded them; afterwards, when they would have fought, they were beaten, because God would not be with them. Nevertheless, no one should despair; repentance and right conduct always find grace.

After emperor and princes remember that, by God’s commandment, they owe their subjects this protection, they should be exhorted not to be presumptuous and undertake

this work defiantly, or in reliance on their own might or planning; for there are many princes who say, "I have right and authority, therefore I will do it!" Then they pitch in, with pride and boasting of their might, and meet defeat at last; for if they did not feel their power, the matter of right would have small enough effect on them, as is proved in other cases, in which they pay no heed to right. It is not enough, then, for you to know that God has committed this or that to you; you should also do it with fear and humility, for God commands no one to do anything by his own wisdom or strength, but He, too, will have a part in it and be feared. Nay, He will do it through us, and will therefore have us pray to Him, and not become presumptuous or forget His help, as the Psalter says, "The Lord hath pleasure in those that fear Him and wait for His kindness." Otherwise we should persuade ourselves that we could do things and did not need God's help, and take to ourselves the victory and the honor that belong to Him.

Therefore an emperor or prince ought to learn well that verse of the Psalter, in Psalm 44:6-7, "I rely not upon my bow, and my sword helps me not, but thou helpst us from our enemies and puttest to shame them that hate us," and also the rest of what that Psalm says; and Psalm 60:10-12, "Lord God, thou goest not out with our host; give us aid in our need, for man's help is vain; with God we will do deeds; he shall tread down our enemies."

These and like sayings have had to be fulfilled by many kings and great princes, from the beginning to the present day. They have become examples, though they had God's commandment and authority and right.

Emperor and princes, therefore, should not let these sayings become a jest. Read here the apt illustration given in Judges 20:18, how the children of Israel were twice beaten by the Benjamites, despite the fact that God bade them fight and that they had the best of right. Their boldness and presumption were their downfall, as the text says, *Fidentes fortitudine et numero*. It is true that one should have horses and men and weapons and everything that is needed for battle, if they are to be had, so that one is not tempting God; but when one has them, one must not be bold because of it, for God is not to be forgotten or despised, since it is written, "All victory comes from heaven."

If these two things are present, God's commandment and our humility, then there is no danger or need, so far as this second man, the emperor, is concerned; we are strong enough for the whole world and must have good fortune and success. But if we have not good fortune, it is certainly because one of the two things is lacking; we are going to war either without God's commandment, or in our own presumption, or the first soldier, the Christian, is not there with his prayers. It is not necessary here to warn against seeking honor or booty in war; for he who fights in humility and obedience to God's command, with his mind fixed solely upon the simple duty of protecting and defending his subjects, will forget honor and booty; nay, they will come to him, without his seeking, more richly and gloriously than he can wish.

Here someone will say, “Where shall we find pious fighting-men, who will act this way?” Answer: The Gospel is preached to all the world, and yet very few believe; nevertheless Christendom believes and abides.

Therefore I am writing this instruction with no hope that it will be accepted by all; indeed, most people will laugh and scoff at me. For me it is enough if, with this book, I shall be able to instruct some princes and their subjects; even though they may be very few in number, that does not matter to me; there will be victory and good fortune enough. And would to God that I had instructed only the emperor, or him who is to conduct the war in his name and at his command; I would then be of good hope. It has often happened, indeed, it usually happens, God gives a whole land and kingdom good fortune and success through one single man; just as, on the other hand, through one knave at court He brings a whole land into all sorts of distress and misery; as Solomon says, in Ecclesiastes, “A single knave does great harm.”

Thus we read of Naaman, the captain of the king of Syria, that through this one man God gave the whole land good fortune and success. So through the holy Joseph He gave great good fortune to the whole kingdom of Egypt, and in 2 Kings 3:14, Elisha says to Jehoram, “I would not look to thee, if Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, were not there,” and thus the godless kings of Israel and Edom had to be helped for the sake of one godly man, when otherwise they would have been ruined in all kinds of distress; and in the book of Judges one can see the good that God did through Ehud, Gideon, Deborah, Samson, and other individuals, though the people were not worthy of it. See, on the other hand, what great harm Doeg did at the court of King Saul (1 Kings 22:1) and what Absalom accomplished against his father David, with the aid and counsel of Ahithophel (2 Kings 15:1).

I say this in order that it may not frighten us, or move us in any way, if the great majority are unbelieving and fight under the emperor’s banner with an unchristian mind. We must remember, too, that Abraham, all by himself, was able to do much (Genesis 14:1 and 17:1). It is certain, also, that among the Turks, who are the army of the devil, there is not one who is a Christian or has an humble and a right heart. In 1 Kings 14:1, the godly Jonathan said, “It is not hard for God to give victory by many or by few,” and himself inflicted on the Philistines a great slaughter such as Saul could not, with his whole army. It does not matter, therefore, if the crowd is not good, provided only that the head and some of the chief men are upright; it would be good, of course, if all were upright, but that is scarcely possible.

The limit of the duty of obedience

Moreover, I hear it said that there are those in Germany who desire the coming of the Turk and his government, because they would rather be under the Turk than under the emperor or princes. It would be hard to fight against the Turk with such people. Against them I have no better advice to give than that pastors and preachers be exhorted to be diligent in their preaching and faithful in instructing such people, pointing out to them the

danger they are in and the wrong that they are doing, how they are making themselves partakers of great and numberless sins and loading themselves down with them in the sight of God, if they are found in this opinion. For it is misery enough to be compelled to suffer the Turk as overlord and to endure his government; but willingly to put oneself under it, or to desire it, when one need not and is not compelled – the man who does that ought to be shown the sin he is committing and how terribly he is going on.

In the first place, these people are faithless and guilty of perjury to their rulers, to whom they have taken oaths and done homage; and this is in God's sight a great sin that does not go unpunished. On account of such perjury the good king Zedekiah had to perish miserably, because he did not keep the oath that he gave to the heathen emperor at Babylon. Such people may think, or persuade themselves, that it is within their own power and choice to betake themselves from one lord to another, acting as though they were free to do or not to do what they pleased, forgetting and not remembering God's commandment and their oath, by which they are in duty bound to be obedient, until they are forcibly compelled to abandon it or are put to death for it; as the peasants thought, in the recent rebellion, and were beaten because of it. For just as a man may not slay himself, but endure until he is forcibly slain by others, so no one should evade his obedience or his oath, unless he is released from it by others, either by force or by favor and permission. f130 The preachers must diligently impress this on such people; indeed their office of preaching compels them to do so, for it is their duty to warn their parishioners, and guard them against sin and harm to their souls. For one who willingly turns from his lord and takes the side of the Turk can never stay under the Turk with a good conscience, but his own heart will always speak to him and rebuke him thus – "See, you were faithless to your overlord and deprived him of the obedience that you owed him, and robbed him of his right to rule over you; now, no sin can be forgiven unless stolen goods are restored; but how shall you make restitution to your lord, when you are under the Turk and cannot make restitution. One of two things, then, must happen; – either you must toil and labor forever, trying to get away from the Turk and back to your overlord; or your conscience must forever suffer compunction, pain and unrest (if, indeed, it does not result in despair and everlasting death), because you submitted to the Turk willingly and without necessity, against your sworn duty. In the latter case you must be among the Turks with your body, but over on this side with your heart and conscience. What have you gained then? Why did you not stay on this side from the first?"

In the second place, beside all that, such faithless, disloyal, perjured folk commit a still more horrible sin. They make themselves partakers of all the abominations and wickedness of the Turks; for he who willingly goes over to the Turks makes himself their comrade and an accomplice in all their doings. Now we have heard above what kind of man the Turk is, viz., a destroyer, enemy, and blasphemer of our Lord Jesus Christ, who instead of the Gospel and faith, sets up his shameful Mohammed and all kinds of lies, ruins all temporal government and home-life, or marriage, and, since his warfare is nothing but murder and bloodshed, is a tool of the devil himself.

See, then! He who consorts with the Turk must be partaker of this terrible abomination and brings down on his own head all the murder, all the blood that the Turk

has shed, and all the lies and vices with which he has damaged Christ's Kingdom and led souls astray. It is miserable enough if one is forced to be under this blood-dog and devil against his own will, and see and hear these abominations, and put up with them as the godly Lot had to do in Sodom, as St. Peter writes; it is not necessary to seek them of one's own accord, or desire them.

Nay, a man ought far rather die twice over in war, obedient to his overlord, than have, like a poor Lot, to be brought by force into such Sodoms and Gomorrahs. Still less ought a godly man long to go there of his own accord, in disobedience, and against God's commandment and his own duty. That would mean not only to become partaker in all the wickedness of the Turk and the devil, but to strengthen and further them; just as Judas not only made himself partaker of the wickedness of the Jews against Christ, but strengthened it and helped it along, while Pilate did not act as evilly as Judas, as Christ testifies in John 17:1.

In the third place, it is to be impressed by the preachers on the people that, if they do go over to the Turks, they will not have bettered themselves and their hopes and intentions will not be realized. For it is the Turk's way not to let any who are anything or have anything stay in the place where they live, but to put them far back in another land, where they are sold and must be servants. Thus they fulfill the proverb "Running out of the rain and falling in the water"; and "Lifting the plate and breaking the dish." Bad becomes worse; it scarcely serves them wrong. For the Turk is a true man of war, who has other ways of treating land and people, both in getting them and keeping them, than our emperor, kings, and princes have. He does not trust and believe these disloyal people and has the force to do as he will; thus he has not the same need of people that our princes have.

The preachers and pastors, I say, must impress this upon such disloyal people, with constant admonition and warning, for it is the truth, and it is needed. But if there are some who despise this exhortation and will not be moved by it, let them go on to the devil, as St. Paul had to let the Greeks, and St. Peter the Jews go; the others should not mind. Indeed, if it were to come to war, I would rather that none of these were under the emperor's banner, or stayed under it, but were all on the Turk's side; they would be beaten all the sooner and in battle they would do the Turk more harm than good, for they are out of favor with God, the devil, and the world, and are surely, all of them, condemned to hell. It is good to fight against such people, who are plainly and surely damned both by God and the world.

There are many depraved and abandoned and wicked men; but anyone with any sense will without doubt, heed such exhortation and be moved to stay in his obedience, and not throw his soul so carelessly into hell to the devil, but rather fight with all his might under his overlord, even though, in so doing, he is slain by the Turks.

But you say again, "If the pope is as bad as the Turk – and you yourself call him Antichrist, together with his clergy and his followers – then the Turk is as godly as the pope, for he acknowledges the four Gospels and Moses, together with the prophets; must

we not, then, fight the pope as well as the Turk, or, perhaps, rather than the Turk?”
Answer: I cannot deny that the Turk holds the four Gospels to be divine and true, as well as the prophets, and also speaks very highly of Christ and His mother, but at the same time, he believes that his Mohammed is above Christ and that Christ is not God, as has been said above. We Christians acknowledge the Old Testament as divine Scripture, but now that it is fulfilled and is, as St. Peter says, in Acts 15:10, too hard without God’s grace, it is abolished and no longer binds us.

The relation between the Koran and the Bible

Just so Mohammed treats the Gospel; he declares that it is indeed true, but has long since served its purpose; also that it is too hard to keep, especially on the points where Christ says that one is to leave all for His sake, love God with the whole heart, and the like.

Therefore God has had to give another new law, one that is not so hard and that the world can keep, and this law is the Koran. But if anyone asks why he does no miracles to confirm this new law, he says that that is unnecessary and of no use, for people had many miracles before, when Moses’ law and the Gospel arose, and did not believe. Therefore his Koran did not need to be confirmed by wasted miracles, but by the sword, which is more effective than miracles. Thus it has been, and still is the case among the Turks, that everything is done with the sword, instead of with miracles.

On the other hand, the pope is not much more godly than Mohammed and resembles him extraordinarily; for he, too, praises the Gospel with his lips, but holds that many things in it are too hard, and these things are the very ones that Mohammed and the Turks also consider too hard, such as those contained in Matthew 5:20. Therefore he interprets them, and makes of them consilia, i.e., “counsels,” which no one is bound to keep unless he desires to do so, as has been shamelessly taught at Paris, and in other universities, foundations, and monasteries. Therefore, too, he does not rule with the Gospel, or Word of God, but has made a new law and a Koran, viz., his decretals, and enforces them with the ban, as the Turk enforces his Koran with the sword; he even calls the ban his spiritual sword, though only the Word of God is that and should be called that (Ephesians 6:17). Nevertheless, he uses the temporal sword also, when he can, or, at least, calls upon it, and urges and stirs up others to use it. And I am confident that if the pope could use the temporal sword as mightily as the Turk, he would perhaps lack the will to do so even less than the Turk and, indeed, they have often tried it.

Italian weddings – homosexual relationships

God visits them with the same plague, too, and smites them with blindness, so that it happens to them as St. Paul says, in Romans 1:28, about the shameful vice of the dumb sins, that God gives them up to a perverse mind because they pervert the Word of God. So blind and senseless are both pope and Turk that both of them commit the dumb sins shamelessly, as an honorable and praiseworthy thing. Since they think lightly of

marriage, it serves them right that there are dog-marriages (and would to God they were dog-marriages), nay, “Italian marriages” and “Florentine brides” f131 among them; and they think these things good;

For I hear one horrible thing after another about what an open and glorious Sodom Turkey is, and everybody who has looked around a little in Rome and Italy knows very well how God there revenges and punishes the prohibition of marriage, so that Sodom and Gomorrah, which God overwhelmed in days of old with fire and brimstone, must seem a mere jest compared with these abominations. On this one account, therefore, I would regret the rule of the Turk; nay, it would be intolerable in Germany.

Not crusade, but armed defence

“What are we to do, then? Are we to fight against the pope, as well as the Turk, since the one is as godly as the other?” Answer: Treat the one like the other and no one is wronged; like sin should receive like punishment. I mean that this way. If the pope and his followers were to attack the empire with the sword, as the Turk does, he should receive the same treatment as the Turk; and this is what was done to him by the army of Emperor Charles before Pavia. For there stands God’s verdict, “He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword.” I do not advise that men go to war with the Turk or the pope because of his false belief or evil life, but because of the murder and destruction which he does. But the best thing about the papacy is that it has not yet the sword, as the Turk has; otherwise it would surely undertake to bring the whole world into subjection, though it would accomplish no more than to bring it to faith in the pope’s Koran, the decretals. For he pays as little heed as the Turk to the Gospel, or Christian faith, and knows it as little, though with fasts, which he himself does not keep, he makes a great pretense of Turkish sanctity; thus they deserve the reputation of being like the Turk, though they are against Christ.

Against the papacy, however, because of its errors and wicked ways, the first man, Sir Christian, has been aroused, and he attacks it boldly with prayer and the Word of God; and he has wounded it, too, so that they feel it and rage. But no raging helps; the axe is laid to the tree and the tree must be uprooted, unless it bears different fruit. I see clearly that they have no notion of reforming, but the farther things go, the more stubborn they become and want to butt their way through, and boast, “All or nothing, bishop or drudge!” I consider them so godly that, unless they reform or turn from their shameful ways, both they themselves and the whole world admit that it is not to be endured, and that they should betake themselves to their comrade and brother, the holy Turk. Ah well! May our heavenly Father quickly hear their own prayer and grant that, as they say, they may be “all or nothing, bishop or drudge.” Amen! They will have it so. Amen! So let it be, let it come true, as God pleases!

But you say further: “How can the Emperor Charles fight against the Turk in these days, when he has against him such hindrances and such treachery from kings, princes, the Venetians, indeed from almost everybody?” Answer: What a man cannot lift, he must

let lie. If we can do no more, we must let our Lord Jesus Christ counsel and aid us, by His coming, which cannot be far off. For the world has come to its end; the Roman Empire is almost gone and torn to bits; it stands as the kingdom of the Jews stood when Christ's birth was near; the Jews had scarcely anything of their kingdom, Herod was the token of farewell. And so, I think, now that the Roman Empire is almost gone, Christ's coming is at the door, and the Turk is the Empire's token of farewell, a parting gift to the Roman Empire; and just as Herod and the Jews hated each other, though both made common cause against Christ, so Turk and papacy hate each other, but make common cause against Christ and His kingdom.

Nevertheless, what the emperor can do for his subjects against the Turk, that he should do, so that even though he cannot entirely prevent the abomination, he may yet try to protect and rescue his subjects by checking the Turk and holding him off. To this protection the emperor should be moved not only by his bounden duty, his office, and the command of God, nor only by the unchristian and vile government that the Turk brings in, as has been said above, but also by the misery and wretchedness that comes to his subjects. They know better than I, beyond all doubt, how cruelly the Turk treats those whom he carries away captive. He treats them like cattle, dragging, towing, driving those that can go along, and killing out of hand those that cannot go, whether they are young or old.

All this and the like more ought to move all the princes, and the whole empire, to forget their own cases and contentions, or let them rest for awhile, and unite, in all earnest, to help the wretched; so that things may not go as they went with Constantinople and Greece. They quarreled with one another and looked after their own affairs, until the Turk overwhelmed both of them together, as he has already come very near doing to us in a similar case. But if this is not to be, and our unrepentant life makes us unworthy of any grace or counsel or support, we must put up with it and suffer under the devil; but that does not excuse those who could help and do not.

I wish it to be clearly understood, however, by what I have said, that it was not for nothing that I called Emperor Charles the man who ought to go to war against the Turk. As for other kings, princes, and rulers who despise Emperor Charles, or are not his subjects, or are not obedient, I leave them to take their own chances. They shall do nothing by my advice or admonition; what I have written here has been for Emperor Charles and his subjects; the others do not concern me. For I well know the pride of some kings and princes who would be glad if not Emperor Charles, but they, were to be the heroes and masters to win honor against the Turk. I grant them the honor, but if they are beaten in trying to get it, it will be their own fault. Why do they not conduct themselves humbly toward the true head and the regularly appointed ruler. The rebellion among the peasants has been punished, but if the rebellion among the princes and lords were also to be punished, I believe that there would be very few princes and lords left. God grant that it may not be the Turk who inflicts the punishment! Amen.

Efficient attack as prevention

Finally, I would have it understood as my kind and faithful advice that, if it comes to the point of war against the Turk, we shall arm and prepare, and not hold the Turk too cheap, acting as we Germans usually do, and coming on the field with twenty or thirty thousand men. And even though a success is granted us and we win a victory, we have no staying-power, but sit down again and carouse until another necessity arises. To be sure, I am not qualified to give instruction on this point, and they themselves know, or ought to know, more about it than I, nevertheless, when I see people acting so childishly, I must think either that the princes and our Germans do not know or believe the strength and power of the Turk, or have no serious purpose to fight against the Turk, but just as the pope has robbed Germany of money under the pretense of the Turkish war and by indulgences, so they, too, following the pope's example, would swindle us out of money.

My advice, therefore, is not to set the armed preparation so low and not to offer our poor Germans to slaughter. If we are not going to make an adequate, honest resistance that will have some staying-power, it were far better not to begin a war, but to give up lands and people to the Turk in time, without useless bloodshed, rather than have him win anyhow in an easy battle and with shameful bloodshed, as happened in Hungary with King Lewis. Fighting against the Turk is not like fighting against the King of France, or the Venetians, or the pope; he is a different kind of warrior; he has people and money in abundance; he beat the Sultan twice in succession, and that took people. Why, dear sir, his people are under arms all the time, so that he can quickly bring together three or four hundred thousand men; if we were to cut off a hundred thousand, he would soon be back again with as many men as before. He has staying-power.

There is, therefore, nothing at all in trying to meet him with fifty or sixty thousand men unless we have an equal or a greater number in reserve. Only count up his lands, dear sir. He has Greece, Asia, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, etc., that is, he has so many lands that if Spain, France, England, Germany, Italy, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, and Denmark were all counted together, they would not equal the land he has. Besides, he is master of all of them and commands effective and ready obedience. And, as has been said, they are constantly under arms and are exercised in warfare, so that he has staying-power, and can deliver two, three, four battles, one after another, as he showed against the Sultan. This Gog and Magog is a different kind of majesty than our kings and princes.

I say this because I fear that my Germans do not know it or believe it, and think, perhaps, that they are strong enough by themselves, and take the Turk for such a lord as the king of France, whom they would easily withstand. But I shall be without blame, and shall not have laden my tongue and pen with blood, if a king measures himself with the Turk all alone, for it is tempting God when anyone sets out with a smaller force against a stronger king, as Christ also shows in the Gospel of Luke, especially since our princes are not the kind of people for whom a divine miracle is to be expected. The king of Bohemia is now a mighty prince, but God forbid that he match himself all alone against the Turk! Let him have Emperor Charles as his captain and all the emperor's power behind him. But then, if everyone will not believe this, let him learn by his own experience! I know

what kind of might the Turk's might is, unless the historians and geographers lie, and daily experience, too; they do not, that I know.

I do not say this in order to scare off the kings from war against the Turk, but as an admonition to make wise and serious preparation, and not to go at this matter in so childish and sleepy a way, for I would like, if possible, to prevent useless bloodshed and lost wars. It would be serious preparation, if our princes were to wind their own affairs in a ball and put their heads and hearts, hands and feet, together, and make one body out of the great crowd from which one could make another army, if one battle were lost, and not, as heretofore, let single kings and princes set upon him – yesterday the king of Hungary, tomorrow the king of Bohemia, day after tomorrow the king of Poland – until the Turk devours them one after another and nothing is accomplished by it, except that our people are betrayed and slaughtered and blood is shed needlessly.

For if our kings and princes were to agree, and stand by one another and help one another, and the Christian man were to pray for them, I should be undismayed and of good hope; the Turk would leave his raging and find in Emperor Charles a man who was his equal. Failing that, if things are to go as they now go, and no one is in agreement with another or loyal to another, and everyone wants to be his own man and takes the field with a beggarly array, I must let it go at that. Of course I will gladly help pray, but it will be a weak prayer, for I can have little faith that it will be heard, because of the childish, presumptuous, and shortsighted way in which such great enterprises are undertaken, knowing that it is tempting God and that He can have no pleasure in it.

Serious warning

What do our dear lords do? They take it for a mere jest. It is a fact that the Turk is at our throat, and even if he does not will to march against us this year, yet he is there, armed and ready any hour to attack us, when he will, and yet our princes discuss, meanwhile, how they can harass Luther and the Gospel. It is the Turk! Against it force must be used! It must be put out! That is what they are doing right now at Speyer, making the greatest ado about the eating of meat and fish, and foolishness like that.

God give you honor, you faithless heads of your poor people! What devil bids you occupy yourselves so violently with spiritual things, which are not committed to you, and be so lax and slothful in dealing with things that God has committed to you and that concern you and your poor people, now in the greatest and most pressing need, and thus be only hindering all those whose intentions are good and who would gladly do their part? Yes, go on singing and hearing the Mass of the Holy Spirit! He has great pleasure in it and will be very gracious to you disobedient, refractory fellows, because you let those things alone that he has committed to you, and work at what he has forbidden you! Yes, the Evil Spirit may hear you!

With this I have cleared my conscience. This book shall be my witness concerning the measure and the manner in which I advise war against the Turk. If any will proceed

otherwise, let him proceed, win or lose. I shall not enjoy his victory and not pay for his defeat, but shall be innocent of all the blood that will be shed in vain. 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 the 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. Amen.