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The Reformation Encounter: Martin Luther's Assessment of Islam and the Turks in the Aftermath of Constantinople's Fall

Abdulwahed Jalal Nori¹ & Sarkawt Tawfeeq Sidiq²

Abstract: After Muhammad II captured Constantinople in 1453 and ended the Byzantine Empire, Islam began to spread to Europe over the next century. It was this constant threat that led Martin Luther (1483–1546) to become acquainted with Islam and acquire information about the Turks and Muslims. Luther was the pioneer of the 16th century's Reformation in Europe and the founder of the Protestant movement. Luther's assessment of Islam and the Turks are investigated in this article with the questions of main themes and subsequent theses. It was observed that Luther used an exclusionary, judgmental, and reactive language on Islam and Turks. His assessments are in compliance with the thesis that was constructed by Christians in Medieval Europe, with the exception of picturing Turks as papist, and his opposite attitudes against the Crusades. The article found conclusively that Luther was highly affected by his own theological and political positions, as well as the political developments of his period.

Keywords: Martin Luther, Islam, Turks, Protestant, Pope

Introduction

Due to their geographical location and having ruled the Islamic world for many years, the Turks served as both object and subject in the formation of this historical consciousness. The Ottoman Empire, which advanced in the Balkans after the conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) and came to the gates of Vienna during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent or Suleiman I (1494–1566), became an important actor in the formation of the European identity (Delanty, 2005). Martin Luther³ (1483-1546), the reformer who pioneered the emergence of Protestantism (1517) against the Catholic Church and the authority of Pope Leo X (henceforth, referred to as “the Pope”) in this period, did not neglect to write about Islam and the Turks. Moreover, he played an important role in the formation of the historical myths mentioned in his works.

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³ Martin Luther (November 10, 1483 - February 18, 1546) was a German priest, theologian, author, hymn writer, professor and Augustinian friar. He was the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation, and gave his name to Lutheranism. Luther was ordained to the priesthood in 1507. He came to reject several teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly the latter's view on indulgences. Luther proposed an academic discussion of the practice and efficacy of indulgences in his *Ninety-five Theses* (1517). For more information, refer to (Hendricks, 2014).

Martin Luther was influential in laying the foundations of anti-Islamic and anti-Turkish ideas and attitudes that are still prevailed in the Western world today (Oberman, 2006). This stance of Luther regarding Islam and Muslims (“the Turks”) is sufficiently well known. It began in the 16th century when Luther received a short book detailing the religious rituals and customs of the Ottoman Turks. He was so impressed with the tract that he decided to reprint it with a new introduction that he wrote. This is not surprising because, given the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, Luther had much to say about the Turks. He repeatedly expressed criticism and hostility towards them. He was a man of his time, and his language reflected the roughness of that time (Canveren, 2014).

Luther's Views on Islam and the Turks

To properly understand Martin Luther’s relationship with the Turks, it is essential to consider the historical context in which he published his writings on the latter. It goes back to the historical writings that he wrote about Muslims and Islam, whereby he used the word “Turks” in all his writings to refer to Muslims, or he used the phrase “Muhammad’s religion” to refer to Islam (Gürsoy, 2018).

Throughout Luther’s public life as a pastor, scholar, and Biblical theologian, he had neither met a Turk nor a Muslim from any other country. However, in most of his writings, the Turks were always present in the background as he consistently described them in a negative light (Grafton, 2017).

The use of the word “Turk” in Luther’s treatises have nothing to do with the actual Turks as a race but, instead, is a reference to Muslims as a whole. Luther rarely used the term “Muslim” in his treatises and mostly preferred the word “Turk” instead. Similarly, instead of the word “Islam,” he preferred the phrase “Muhammad’s religion,” or “Turk’s faith.” Therefore, this part of the explanation of Luther and the Turks does not refer to the Turks as a nation (Canveren, 2014). Since the Ottoman Empire, which comprised Turkish leadership ruling the Islamic world at that time, Luther regarded the Turks as the representatives of Muslims.

Relations between Martin Luther and the Ottoman Turks

Luther’s time and the European religious climate

After Muhammad II captured Constantinople and ended the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Ottoman Empire continued its expansion into Europe over the next century. It was this relentless threat that accounted for the fact that much of Luther’s knowledge of the Islamic religion and customs came primarily from second-hand reports of the Turks’ enemies (Sarah & James, 1996). Protestantism emerged at a time when the Ottoman Empire had advanced into Europe. On the one hand, they feared the Ottomans, while, on the other hand, they feared the exploitation of the Catholic Christian rulers. During this time, Luther and many other important figures warned Christians about the fair administration of the law (Lutheran, 2015).

Martin Luther’s position as a theologian and his Biblical statements were generally welcomed by the Ottoman Empire. In particular, anti-papal discourses were supported by the Ottoman sultans. Luther’s way of thinking and acting was sensible, given his circumstances. The Ottoman Empire entered Europe at that time and ventured as far as Vienna, threatening the whole Christian world. Protestants and Catholics also claimed to be true Christians in opposition to the Ottoman Empire and Islam. Despite this, the Ottoman state prevented the papacy and the Habsburg kingdom from marching to destroy the Protestants (Hüseysin, 2017).

Therefore, the reformers chose to take advantage of the Turks' actions without entering into any alliance with them. Similarly, Luther thought of using them beyond cooperation (Carrasco, 2020).

The significance of the Ottoman Turks in the European Reformation

Due to the doctrinal similarities, many Protestants saw the Ottoman Empire as a useful ally against the Catholic Church. Istanbul became a haven for Protestants fleeing Catholic persecution, where they were tolerated and allowed to establish their churches under Suleiman I (Butt, 2017). Also, the theme of Ottoman Muslim tolerance was a constant theme in Protestant writings of the time. This was usually contrasted with the intolerance of Catholic Spain towards the movement, which persecuted the Protestant reformers and even Muslims in Spain.

At one time, Martin Luther was informed by a member of an imperial mission to Suleiman I that the latter was very interested in Luther and his movement, and asked the ambassadors for Luther's age. When told that Luther was 48 years old, he said, "I wish he were even younger, he would find in me a generous protector." However, upon hearing this, Luther, not being a realistic politician, made the sign of the cross and said, "God protect me from such a generous protector." Although the letters expressing this request are not available today, a name was sent in response. With this name, the support and assistance promised to the Protestants by the Ottoman Empire are clearly described. In addition, the Ottoman Empire's intention to divide the European Christian Union and its political support of the Protestants can be seen in this maneuver.

That said, it must be noted that there is still insufficient information and evidence for the claims that Luther was an ally of the Ottoman state and that an agreement was reached between Suleiman I and Luther (Hüseyin, 2017). While it is claimed that the Ottoman Empire played a role in the rise and support of Protestantism, the Empire presented no theological influence. Politically, it was natural for the Ottoman Empire to support Protestantism and the creation of this new sect; thus, they implemented a policy that led to a rift between Spain, Germany, and other Catholic countries. The Reformation was effective in separating relations between the Western and Turkish worlds (Hüseyin, 2017). Also, historians have argued that the Ottoman Empire supported Luther against the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Germany Charles V (henceforth, referred to as "the Emperor"), and without this support, Protestantism would not have emerged and spread. It was emphasised that the Protestants owed their existence to Suleiman I and the Ottoman Empire. Luther had every reason to be grateful to the Turks instead of fearing them because the Ottoman Empire did not let the Emperor take permanent measures against the Protestants (Choi, 2003).

The Emperor could not suppress the Protestants because he needed the power of other European princes in the war he was waging against the Turks, thus he had to postpone his plans to destroy Luther. From the perspective of real power policy, the safety of reform depended on the strength of the Ottoman army. In many ways, if Suleiman I and Luther were political allies, the Emperor would have worried that the Protestantism could not be destroyed. In any case, the Emperor was unable to deal with reform because of the Turks' threat (Grafton, 2017). The Ottoman Empire treated the Protestants well; Suleiman I wrote an open letter to the Lutherans of Flanders, in which he declared his closeness to them "since they did not worship idols, believed in one God, and fought against the Pope and the Emperor." Throughout the Reformation, several alliances were forged between the Ottoman Empire and Protestant rulers.

Nevertheless, despite claims of similarity, this does not mean that the Ottoman Empire was exclusively pro-Protestant in terms of foreign policy—they worked with Catholic powers when their interests demanded it (Butt, 2017).

Luther believed that a holy war against the Ottoman Empire would be “utterly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and the name of Christ.” However, Christian defeats in the hands of the Turks and the siege of Vienna in 1529, and the pressure from the papacy led Luther to disseminate his views on the need to fight the Turks. Luther felt great pressure due to the victory of the Ottoman Empire and the difficult situation in which Christian world fell. Although the strategy and laws of the regime emphasised the need for cooperation between the Turks and Protestants, Luther defended the need to fight the Turks. He encouraged war against the Turks, but declared that this resistance should be on the side of the Emperor, not the papacy (Rutler, 2016).

Luther’s Early Views

Luther’s initial perceptions of the Turks when they first appeared in Europe

Martin Luther was well aware of the expansion of Islam into central Europe, especially as the Ottoman army appeared on Germany’s doorstep. He even suggested that his writings are a “treasure chest” of knowledge on the Turks and Islam in the first half of the 16th century (Francisco, 2007).

In the 16th century, Luther became so impressed with a short book titled *Tract on the Religion and Customs of the Turks* that he reprinted it with his own introduction. Given the expansion of the Ottoman Empire then, it was not surprising that Luther wrote extensively on the Turkish people, culture and religion. However, it is noted that this particular writing was not as polemic as his other writings.

The book *Tract on the Religion and Customs of the Turks* was first published in 1481 in Latin. It was likely written by Georgius of Hungary (Castor, 2011), who, at age 16, was captured and imprisoned by the Turks for 20 years. His time in prison gave him access to Turkish religious rituals and customs. It was Georgius’ rare favorable writing of Islam and the Ottoman Turks, and his juxtaposed unfavorable writing of the Catholic religious rites in the same tract that interested Luther.

Early in his writings, Luther viewed the Turks positively and criticised the way of life of Christians and Germans until the Ottoman Empire laid siege to Vienna. He said that Germans wandered about like light pigeons without work, eating and drinking like animals, fulfilling all kinds of evil intentions and desires, and taking nothing seriously. Meanwhile, poor German soldiers were put in a very pitiful position and suffered a great defeat (Luther, 2017). On the contrary, when Luther explained his position about the Turks, he stated, “We see that the religion of the Turks or Mohammed is far greater in rituals — and I might almost say in customs — than ours, including even the religion of the religious or of all clergy” (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

The modesty and simplicity of food, clothing, shelter, and everything else, as well as the fasting, prayer, and common assemblies of the people that this book reveals are nowhere to be found among us—. Our religions are but shadows when compared to them, and our people are filthy when compared to theirs for this book shows that the Turks are far superior to our Christians in these things as well.

In other words, if Christianity is a religion of works, then, according to Luther, Muslims have a better religion (Castor, 2011).

Luther's description of the Turks as "the staff of God"

In his early years, Martin Luther, based on his claim of the Bible, believed that God had sent the Turks, who were on Satan's side, to punish the Christians. (Canveren, 2014). Thus, according to Luther, anyone who fights against the Turks is fighting the devil himself. A soldier is called God's executioner. If killed, he goes straight to heaven and dead Turks go to hell (Gürsoy, 2018).

Luther also viewed the Turks from a different perspective. To him, they were not only the knives of God's wrath, but also the servants and saints of Satan. What he meant by mixing the knives of God's wrath with Satan's servants and saints was that Satan has always been God's enemy in his efforts to counter God, but ultimately serves God anyway. Therefore, Luther considered the Turks to be servants and saints of Satan (Clark, 1984). In this context, he reminded readers that "the devil can put on a spiritual face, fast, perform counterfeit miracles, and present his servants with mystical bearings." Such practices and experiences are the common property of all religions; they do not portray religion as true. Even the Satanic religion itself can be accompanied by such experiences and practices. In this sense, the Turks were saints and servants of Satan (Forell, 1946).

When describing the political, military, and social characteristics of the Turks that Luther viewed as "demonic", he also sometimes appreciated them as the last theme. The following description in the text entitled "Turks Life and Tradition" are noteworthy at this point: "The most essential characteristic of Turks is that their priests (clergymen and scholars) lead glorious, brave and sophisticated lives. Then we can call them angels. On the other hand, you will find that they often meet for worship in their church (mosque) and have a thorough upbringing, quietness, and pleasant behavior. There is no such discipline or silence in any of our churches ("Reformation and Islam," 2016).

Luther's Changing Perspective

The evolution of Luther's views on the Turks

Luther explained his views on the Ottoman threat as God's punishment in 1520. In his 34th sermon, he wrote that fighting against the Turks is nothing but an attempt against God who punishes Christians for their sins. He then opined that the Church deserves the punishment of an angry God when led by the Pope into a religious war of their own making (Grafton, 2017). In doing so, Luther, as usual, distinguished one's duties as a Christian from one's duties as a citizen. He felt that as Christians, all men were called to repentance and prayer. He was also aware of the guilt of so-called Christian nations and knew that sin and guilt were not limited to German territories under Roman rule and Roman Catholic princes (Forell, 1946). They were guilty of grave sin because they openly persecuted the Word of God. However, Evangelicals did not have enough respect for God's Word either, as they had often used it to serve their lust. Therefore, both the Roman Catholics and the Evangelicals deserved God's punishment (Sensenig, 2016).

Luther felt that Germany had taken the deserts to ensure a successful defense against the Turks. Everyone needed to repent and confess their transgressions so that the Turks could be destroyed (Meer, 2013). He stated, "This struggle must begin with repentance, and we must change our very existence, otherwise we will fight in vain." He later elaborated, "If we are to

receive help and advice, we must, first of all, repent and change all such evil deeds” (Lexutt, 2011).

Luther’s shift from viewing Turks as God’s instrument to viewing them as a threat

Martin Luther portrayed the Turks as a nurturing tree of God and a sign of the apocalypse. However, with the siege of Vienna in 1529, he changed his view of them as the military struggle appeared on the real political side (Luther, 1520). Luther realised that defense was not enough as he saw the advancement of the Turks as a threat to Europe. He also realised that he had to propose the means to defend Christianity against this encroaching danger (Forell, 1946).

Contrary to the views in his 1529 treatise “On the Turks War”, Luther wrote about this new threat to German geography. He called on the Germans to fight the Turks—they should try to protect and save their people by blocking the Turks and keeping them away from the people. The Emperor should be induced to do so not merely out of duty, responsibility, or divine command, but also out of the non-Christian and corrupt Turks administration and the misery that has befallen his people (Dodgers, 2017). According to Luther, to achieve victory in the war against the Turks, certain conditions must first be fulfilled. The first condition was the qualities that soldiers who are engaged in this war must possess. Luther listed these characteristics as honesty, uprightness, humility, and the absence of lust for fame and the spoils of success. Next, Luther stipulated as a second condition that the German principalities, which were divided in his day, must act as a whole. To that end, he maintained that he would not be shocked and would have good hope if German kings and princes would agree with each other and stand up for each other, and if all Christians also prayed for them (Canveren, 2014). Finally, as a clergyman, Luther brought the dimension of prayer to the forefront of the struggle in preaching. He expressed the following: “Anyone can pray that these abominations Turks do not overpower us who are the wrath of God.” According to this context, the Word of God must be heeded and prayed for justice to prevail on earth. These prayers will cause Christians to turn to God in sincerity and even convince God that the Turks are the enemies of Jesus Christ. According to Luther, with these two possible outcomes of prayer and God’s blessing, the harm done to Christians by the Turks and Satan would end (Francisco, 2007).

According to Luther, a double war should be waged against the Turks. The first of these was repentance and forgiveness as a good Christian. The other was that the European armies fighting against the Turks must be genuine Christian armies. In fact, in Luther’s opinion, if these Christian armies fought the Turks without repentance, the victory of the Turks would be better than theirs. Moreover, the unrepentant Christian armies were no different from the Turkish army (Hüseyin, 2017). Luther attacked the Turks very unscientifically, stating that they were also destroyers of Christian morality. Besides all the alleged Turks’ heretical laws and religious practices, Luther considered them as murderers and whores. The Turks did not fight for necessity or to protect their territory. As highwaymen, they sought to plunder and damage other lands whose people have done nothing to them because, according to their religion, it is good to attack and kill (Lutheran, 2015). Moreover, the Turks were the enemy of the institution of marriage. Luther knew that it was customary among the Turks for a man to have several wives. He had heard news that Muslims buy and sell women like cattle. This turned the Turks, in his mind, into whores that went against fundamental Christian morality. Luther saw the punishment of God and the servants and saints of Satan in the Turks. He believed the Turks led their lives in depravity and that they were possessed by the spirit of lies and murder (Forell, 1946).

Luther proposed that Christian Europe must first stand against the Turks’ imperialism in a defensive war led by secular officials and, second, Germans must not be deceived by reports

of supposed intolerance among Turks (Francisco, 2007). Luther wanted all soldiers who had to fight the Turks to know their special connection to the forces of evil. He stated: "If you go to war with the Turks, make sure you are not fighting a war of flesh and blood that is the army of the Turks is the army of Satan." The Turks' special connection to the realm of Satan proved to Luther the renewed power of the Muslim armies during the Reformation (Lexutt, 2011).

Luther's main goal here was to persuade Christians to organise themselves by emphasising the strengths of the "enemy." According to him, the precondition for supremacy over the Turks was the accomplishment of true repentance and conversion to true religion. Luther also criticised Christian (Catholic) Europe by "praising" the Turks in some ways (Luther, 1883).

What is interesting about Luther's views on the Turks is that they were ambiguous, because when the Turks came to Europe, Luther was engaged in religious reform against the Pope and the Emperor. He described the Turks as the staff of God and insisted that they not be fought". Rather, he considered their arrival as a form of punishment for the wickedness of the Pope and a means to reduce the pressure on the Pope and the Emperor on his religious reform movement. However, after the Turks reached the heart of Europe, which was Vienna, they became a threat to the whole continent and even to its religious reform. As a result, he changed his attitude towards the Turks and described them as devils, thieves, robbers, and murderers—whoever fought the Turks was fighting against the devil. Such a soldier would be called the Executioner of God who would go straight to heaven if he were killed, while the dead Turks would go to hell. This proves the fact that Luther changed his attitude towards the Turks according to his personal interests.

Comparison of the Pope and the Turks

An examination of Luther's comparisons between the Papacy and the Turks

Both the papacy and Turks appear as key aspects of Luther's readings because his thought is essentially based on criticisms of the teachings and practices of the papacy and the Catholic Church. That Luther compared the Turks with the Pope and defined them both as enemies of the Christian world distinguishes him from other medieval readings (Canveren, 2014). He claimed that the papacy had done more harm to Christianity than the Turks. Based on end-time prophecies and Biblical references, he developed the jurisprudence that not only the Turks but also the papacy were signs of the apocalypse. He described the Pope as a "cunning internal enemy" and the Turks as a "dreadful external enemy" and labelled both as two "anti-Christ." He also frequently used the adjectives "liar" for the Pope and "murderer" for the Turks (Castor, 2011).

Luther stated that the Turks believed they kept everyone free. The Pope did not do this—on the contrary, he imposed his satanic lies on the whole Christian world. In this case, the material and moral damage of the papal army was ten times greater than that of the Turks. In addition, worldly damage was done to the Christians by the Pope and the Turks, hence Luther accused both actors of harm and of being terrible parallels. While the Pope commanded armies and brazen immorality in Rome (as stated in Luther's essay on the war against the Turks), and forbade and condemned sinful marriage on the grounds of chastity, the Turks separated women from their husbands and sold them as cattle. In short, the Turks, and the papacy did nothing but ruin the reputation of the house, city and church (Lee, 2000). Fearful that the decline of Christian doctrine in Europe would result in mass conversion, Luther identified two ways in which Christianity was threatened: the Pope in the West and Islam in the East. These two ways

were distinct, as Luther considered Muhammad as a figure who falsely presented himself as a pure saint. Nonetheless, he referred to the Pope as the anti-Christ in spirit and the Turks as anti-Christ in flesh (Castor, 2011).

Luther's portrayal of the Pope and Turks as enemies of Christianity

Luther stated that the Turks were, on one hand, an instrument of God sent to punish a wayward Christianity and, on the other hand, an instrument of Satan to scourge the world. Similarly, he viewed the Pope and his minions as instruments of Satan sent to impose spiritual warfare on Christianity. This juxtaposition meant that the Pope and the Turks often came together as those who blasphemed Christ in the spiritual and worldly realm (Grafton, 2017). It is perhaps not so surprising then that Luther rarely spoke of the Turks in this regard without mentioning the papacy. His colleagues recorded him suggesting that they were both anti-Christ—the soul of the anti-Christ was the Pope, while his flesh was the Turks. Moreover, one attacked the church physically, while the other attacked spiritually (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). Since the Christian prayer is against both, and will descend them into hell, Luther ended up interpreting both the papal and the Turks' religious worldviews in the same way, that is, each persecuted Christ in their respective way (Rutler, 2016).

According to Luther's interpretation, it was as follows: The kingdom of the Turks (the Beast) reigned in the East. And the Papacy (False Prophet or Anti-Christ) reigned in the West. Both were present under Satan's command and were waiting for orders to launch the final assault on the church. Because the end of the world is near, he wrote, 'Satan must attack Christianity with both his forces. But interestingly, and perhaps because of his proximity, Luther almost always viewed the papacy as a greater threat than the Turks. He often remarked that relative to Pope, "The Turks appear to the world as pure saints" (Francisco, 2007). He summoned the Pope and saw him as the true main enemy (anti-Christ). In his view, the Turks were mere plagues sent to punish the Christians for their sins. It is no coincidence then that the two major writings were written in 1529, when the Ottoman troops were besieging Vienna (Luther, 1997).

Luther's Apocalyptic Beliefs

Luther's beliefs about the end of the world and the role of the Turks

Luther believed in the end of the world and that the Ottoman threat was one of its signs, so it became crucial for him to recognise the ultimate enemy, acting both outside and inside the church. In this sense, the external enemy was represented by the Ottoman Turks, while the internal enemy, which was more complex to see, was represented by the papacy (Carrasco, 2020). Luther also noted the similarities between Islam and Protestantism in their rejection of idols, though the Turks were much more stringent in their total rejection of images. In the war against the Turks, Luther was less critical of them than he was of the Pope, whom he called the anti-Christ (following the sentiments of Protestantism and Islam). Such statements came dangerously close to crusading ideology. Furthermore, he placed the war against the Turks on par with his religious struggle against the papacy. Luther argued that, historically, there have been two intertwined images of the Protestant enemy: the Pope and the Turks. Hence, even if the Catholic Church and Luther as a Protestant looked upon the Turks as a common enemy, in the eyes of Luther, the papacy and the Turks were two equal enemies. This hostility was so deep that it even found its way into church hymnals (Gürsoy, 2018).

Luther's view that the Pope and the Turks were signs of the apocalypse

Luther criticised the Turks and he compared Turks to the Pope, and his actions were to break and attack the Pope in order to create equality between them in front of the people and make the Christian community aware that the Pope was their enemy, not their father. Thus, in some sense, he criticised the Pope using Islam, but also used the latter to reform his religion (Francisco, 2007).

When the reason for this comparison is questioned, it becomes understandable that Islam and the Turks were used as tools to criticise the papacy and the Catholic Church. Using these comparisons, Luther explained that the Catholics were corrupting “true” Christianity—he specifically asserted that the Pope and the Church had perverted sacred religion for their worldly interests.

Based on the above texts, Luther, in drawing parallels between the Pope and the Turks, aimed to use the great threat posed by the Ottoman invasion to support the reforms he had declared in religion and the Christian world. Here, he wisely published messages in both Latin and German languages to the Christian community because he knew how the community viewed Islam, given their long history of confrontation that started with their first contact in Andalusia to their confrontation in the Crusades. They had a negative and aggressive image of Islam, though Islam was not like that. However, all these images were presented by many orientalist to the Christian community for the former’s own interests and goals.

Conclusion

Martin Luther’s discourses and theses on Islam and the Turks (Muslim) were, as in all other medieval European writings, exceptional, judgmental, and reactive. Despite being a figure who created significant change in Europe in both religious and political terms, he was essentially unable to divorce himself from the medieval mentality in his assessments of Islam and the Turks. He portrayed the Turks as an enemy to be fought, as savages, and as lustful human beings. Considering the conclusions he reached in his assessments and the attitudes he adopted, it is understandable that Luther fitted the period he criticised.

Although he often compared Islam and the Ottoman Empire with the Pope and the Catholic Church, Luther also opposed all of them. He sometimes criticised the papacy by using the Turks in his texts and sometimes did the reverse, all the while calling Christians to repentance and sincere prayer in the name of fighting the Turks. This was clearly an invitation to purge Europeans of Catholic teachings and practices. His criticisms of the teachings and practices of his day also created a split in the method of combating the Turks, as he was strongly opposed to the “crusader” strategy.

Finally, there are points in Martin Luther’s assessments that could be described as paradoxical and severe confusion, the most significant being that he considered the war with the Turks, who were God’s wrath, to be the equivalent of God’s war.

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