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MARTIN LUTHER'S FAREWELL TO ARMS: THE TWO KINGDOMS AND THE REJECTION OF CRUSADING | STEVEN WEDGEWORTH

Martin Luther's political theology has fallen on hard times. While it was once common to give him credit for the emergence of modern political liberties, Luther's legacy has, especially since the Second World War, soured. Many have claimed that he set the stage for an unholy sort of sacred nationalism, while more recent commentators say that Luther had no political theology at all, but was instead content to take a "hands off" approach, ceding everything to an emerging secular state.

Most of this diversity of interpretation stems from a failure to read Luther's politics in light of his foundational theological commitments, especially his doctrine of justification by faith alone. Luther's political thought is actually entirely consistent with his more basic theological affirmations. And there's one place where Luther's political thought is unambiguous and deserves praise, even from the most ardent critics. Martin Luther thoroughly criticized the medieval notion of crusading and, in fact, rejected the entire concept of sacralized violence. While a great defender of the just war, Luther entirely condemned the notion of holy war. Soldiers could indeed be saved, but they could never win the Cross by the sword.

LUTHER'S TWO KINGDOMS

To understand Luther on politics, we must know what he means by his doctrine of the "two kingdoms." Too easily confused as a theory

of "church and state," Luther's two kingdoms were actually entire dimensions. The earthly kingdom had to do with all rule or governance on the earth, or any government that could legitimately make use of coercive authority. This earthly kingdom included the civil magistrate,

but also Christian families and even the political or governmental aspect of the visible church. In short, anything that had earthly laws which could expect compliance and enforcement could be described as an aspect of the earthly kingdom. The spiritual kingdom, on the other hand, was God's jurisdiction over the human soul, concerned with heavenly or spiritual goals. Because of his understanding of St. Paul, Luther taught that this kingdom was free from all law. It was, instead, the immediate reign of Christ through His Spirit in the heart of all believers. This spiritual

kingdom could never be equated with an earthly magistrate, nor even the institutional church as such. It was truly "not of this world."

Luther explains this distinction on several different occasions. In his pamphlet *On Secular Authority*, he says this:

The first point to be noted is that the two parts into which the children of Adam are divided, the one the kingdom of God under Christ, the other the kingdom of the world under [secular] authority, have each their own kind of law. Everyday experience sufficiently shows us that every kingdom must have its own laws and that no kingdom or government can survive without law.

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Secular government has laws that extend no further than the body, goods and outward, earthly matters. But where the soul is concerned, God neither can nor will allow anyone but himself to rule.¹

Luther grounds these two governments on the distinction between the righteousness which comes from the law, which is to say earthly righteousness judged by good works, and the righteousness which justifies a man before God, the righteousness which comes by faith alone. He makes this connection between justification by faith alone and the two kingdoms directly in his treatise *On Soldiers*:

I would have it understood that I am not speaking, this time, about the righteousness that makes men good in the sight of God. For the only thing that can do that is faith in Jesus Christ, granted and given us by the grace of God alone, without any works or merits of our own, as I have written and taught so often and so much in other places; but I am speaking here about external righteousness which is to be sought in offices and works. In other words, to put it plainly, I am dealing here with such questions as these, — whether the Christian faith, by which we are accounted righteous before God can tolerate, alongside it, that I be a soldier, go to war and slay and stab, rob and burn, as one does to enemies, by military law, in times of war.²

This relationship is essential to understanding Luther's view of politics. While earthly government and the laws actions that accompany them can be good, they can never be "heavenly" or of the sort of righteousness that justifies a man before God and secures his eternal salvation.

Luther does not use this distinction to allow for sinning in politics. He says that earthly laws should be founded on justice, defined by the natural law and God's moral teaching in Scripture. He even says that they should measure themselves according to love. But earthly politics are always provisional, and they are always limited in goal. They are concerned with the business of this world and must stop short of reaching into men's souls. Earthly laws have no jurisdiction in the spiritual kingdom.

EARTHLY VIOLENCE

Since Luther distinguishes the two kingdoms in this way, he can

1. Martin Luther, *On Secular Authority*, Luther's Works, Volume 3, (Ages Digital Library, ed. J. J. Schindel, 1997) p. 185

2. Martin Luther, *On Soldiers*, Luther's Works, Volume 5, (Ages Digital Library, ed. C. M. Jacobs, 1997) p. 24

apply the teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount to all Christians, but in a distinctive manner. His central argument against Roman Catholicism in *On Temporal Authority*, is that they restrict the teachings of Christ regarding "resist not evil" (Matt. 5:39) to those Christians who pursue the "counsels of perfection." Practically speaking, this means that only monks, nuns, and certain clergymen carry the burden of Jesus' ethical teaching, while the "ordinary Christian" must be content to disobey or disregard it as impossible. But for Luther, all Christians should obey this teaching of Christ, and that must mean that it is possible. However, since Luther also believes that the Bible is clear that the sword is a divine ordinance endorsed by the

New Testament (particularly Romans 13:1-7), he argues that there must be a consistent way for a Christian to both "resist not evil" (Matt. 5:39) and "avenge wrath on him who practices evil" (Rom. 13:4). The solution is found in the doctrine of the two kingdoms.

Luther explains this duality by appealing to the Christian's ability to personally bear evil done against him but also employ civil government to protect his neighbor and provide public order and stability:

A Christian should be so disposed that he will suffer every evil and injustice, not avenge himself nor bring suit in court, and in nothing make use of secular power and law for himself. For others, however, he may and should seek vengeance, justice, protection and help, and do what he can toward this. Likewise, the State should, either of itself or through the instigation of others, help and protect him without complaint, application or instigation on his part. When the State does not do this, he ought to permit himself to be robbed and despoiled, and not resist the evil, as Christ's words say.³

And also:

In this way, I take it, the word of Christ is reconciled with the passages which establish the sword, so that this is the meaning: No Christian shall wield or invoke the sword for himself and for his cause; but for another he can and ought to wield and invoke it, so that wickedness may be hindered and godliness defended.⁴

Luther uses this very same duality to defend the role of Christians in the army. Christians cannot bear the sword in order to protect their souls, but they can bear it in order to protect their country:

For Christians, indeed, do not fight and have no worldly rulers among them. Their government is a spiritual government, and, according to the Spirit, they are subjects of no one but Christ.

3. *On Secular Authority*, p. 195

4. *ibid*, p. 196



A BATTLE OF THE SECOND CRUSADE. ILLUSTRATION OF WILLIAM OF TYRE'S HISTOIRE DE L'OUTREMER, 1337

Nevertheless, so far as body and property are concerned, they are subject to worldly rulers and owe them obedience. ...Therefore, when they fight, they do it not for themselves or on their own account, but as a service and act of obedience to the rulers under whom they are, as St. Paul writes to Titus, "They shall obey the rulers."⁵

Again, we see a consistent message. Christians do not fight for themselves, nor for Christianity as such. Instead, they fight out of love for their neighbor as they defend earthly goods in a just manner, obeying the rulers God has placed over them.

ON WAR AGAINST THE TURK

The effect of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine is seen most dramatically in his rejection of crusades. Beginning as early as 8th century Byzantium, medieval Christians had held to a form of crusading theology: that they could defend the Christian Church as such through military arms. This ideology came to full flower with Pope Urban II's infamous Council of Clermont, where he is said to have offered the remission of sins in exchange for liberating Jerusalem from the Turks. Crusading was a sort of "war as penance," with the result being a sacril violence thought to be carried out in direct obedience to Christ Himself.

Luther rejected such an ideology entirely. For him it was both impossible and repugnant. The Christian does not fight for Jesus with earthly weapons, and no minister should command Christians to use violence for spiritual goals. Building upon what he had already written in *On Temporal Authority* and *On Soldiers*, Luther explained his criticism of crusading in another pamphlet, *On War Against the Turk*. As you might expect, Luther does allow for Christians to join the army and fight against the invading Turkish power. But he is emphatic that they can only do so as earthly citizens, obeying their earthly rulers. They can fight as Germans. They cannot "fight as Christians," at least not if that means killing Turks in order to spread the kingdom of Christ.

To support this argument, Luther again invokes the two kingdoms:

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.⁶

The Christian soldier must understand his office: it is to serve the temporal authority and protect the land. The soldier's office is not to spread Christ's kingdom or convert the hearts of the enemy by the sword.

Indeed, Luther believes that crusading is a great sin, and he warns against it in emphatic terms:

5. *On Soldiers*, p. 28

6. Martin Luther, *On War Against the Turk*, Luther's Works, Volume 5, (Ages Digital Library, ed. C. M. Jacobs, 1997) p. 65

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.⁷

A few sentences later he adds:

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."⁸

Is the Christian's only recourse against the realistic fear of the invasion of Christendom by Muslim armies, which in fact happened, then, secular warfare? Not exactly. Luther goes on to say that there is a way that the Christian can fight the Turk. They can fight through repentance and prayer.

Christians should renew their spiritual lives with God, and they should call for revival in their own churches. This, Luther believes, will strike a mighty blow against the Turk. Indeed, the power of the gospel is such that over time, even the Turk can be brought to salvation. This will not happen if Christians attempt to spread the gospel by the sword. But it can happen through prayer and holiness. Christian ministers should therefore not preach crusading but rather the cross of Christ. They should hold the gospel before their people's eyes and let their sword be the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

Thus was Martin Luther's political theology applied to the topic of holy war: he could only reject it. Because of the nature of the gospel, Christians can spread Christ's kingdom exclusively through the Word: through preaching, persuasion, and peaceful means. Only the Spirit will slay Christ's enemies, cutting them to the heart with the Word and burying them in Christ,—in other words, conversion, salvation, and eternal life. And thus, while there remains a place for civil defense and the protection of one's neighbors and common land, the Christian cannot and must not join the call for crusades. To do so would, in fact, be a great dishonor to the cause of Christ.

Luther is a complex thinker, and he is certainly not without his objectionable moments. But here, with his two kingdoms doctrine, we see a great aid to the kingdom of Christ. The wrath of man can never bring about the righteousness of God, and so the Gospel of Peace ought to be embodied in our refusal to spread it by the sword.

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7. *ibid*, p. 66

8. *ibid*, p. 67

INTRODUCTION TO HEINRICH BULLINGER'S *DECADES II.7: OF THE MAGISTRATE* | BRADFORD LITTLEJOHN

One of the aspects of Reformation theology that is most liable to puzzle a modern reader is its pervasive insistence on the God-given calling of the civil magistrate to oversee and where necessary reform the church. Although we are apt to try and excuse it as simply a pragmatic effort to seek the protection of powerful princes against oppressing prelates, it does not take much reading to realize that, on the contrary, this principle was deeply anchored in their theology. In Luther's *Letter to the Christian Nobility*, he articulated the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers," empowering lay authorities to take a role in reforming the church. Although Luther, recognizing that "a wise prince is a mighty rare bird, and an upright prince even rarer,"¹ was always cautious about entrusting too much ecclesiastical power to grasping rulers, both he and Melancthon eventually filled out an account of church and society in which Christian rulers played an indispensable role in maintaining the good order and administration of reformed churches, and helping protect them against heresy and schism.

The fullest theology of the role of the Christian magistrate, however, was outlined by the Zurich reformers, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) and especially his successor Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575). Although the broad outlines of their ecclesiology were the same as Luther's (resting on the same basic distinction of two realms or kingdoms), several factors impelled them in the direction of a more robust and optimistic account of the "godly magistrate."

First was the need to respond to the threat of Anabaptism with its frontal attack on the idea of Christians playing a role in civil government; the Anabaptists, as discussed previously, had a strong early presence in Zurich. Second was the nature of the close-knit city-state polity of Switzerland; with republican governments overseeing relatively small areas, a close partnership of ministers and magistrates was feasible. Third, and most theologically important, was the Zurich

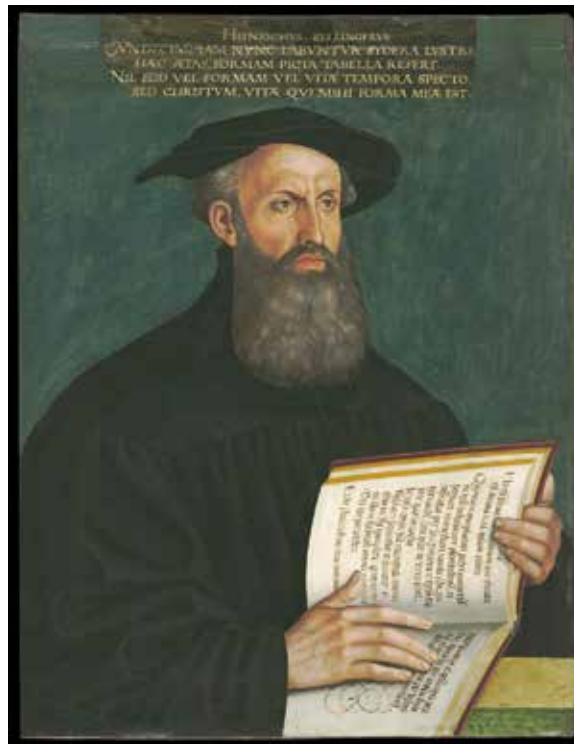
reformers' emphasis on the continuity of Old and New Testaments, which was to become a distinctive of the Reformed tradition over against the Lutheran. It is, after all, readily evident to any reader of the Old Testament that civil and religious responsibilities were closely

intertwined, with the kings of Israel and Judah being judged primarily on the extent to which they did or did not enforce true religion and root out idolatry. Since the Zurich reformers did not hesitate to treat Israel and the church as one people under two phases of the administration of the one covenant of grace, neither did they hesitate to argue strenuously for Christian rulers to take up the duties of their Old Testament counterparts, looking to godly kings like Hezekiah and Josiah as their examples.

Heinrich Bullinger was one of the most extraordinary men of the Reformation, though one largely forgotten and rarely quoted today. His long life witnessed nearly all the decisive phases of the Reformation, and although he almost never left the small city of Zurich, his influence, wielded largely through an extraordinary letter-writing network, spanned the length and breadth of the Continent. At age 27, Bullinger stepped into Zwingli's larger-than-life

shoes as leading minister of Zurich following Zwingli's death at the Battle of Kappel. He adeptly shepherded the church there through the tense political situation that followed, navigating the ecclesiastical isolation that had been created by Luther's hostility, and eventually forging strong ties with Bucer in Strasbourg, Calvin in Geneva, and many other centers of what was to eventually become the Reformed tradition.

Perhaps most significant and lasting, however, was his forty-year-long role as a prophetic mentor to the English Reformation. Recognizing early on the enormous strategic importance for the Protestant cause of Henry VIII's defection from Rome, Bullinger dedicated his treatise on Scripture to Henry in 1538, and was to similarly dedicate treatises to Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth. By the 1560s, he was the leading theological authority for the Church of England, consulted by bishops and theologians on myriad questions. His strong view of the role of the godly magistrate in ordering and governing the church was to



HEINRICH BULLINGER, HANS ASPER, 1549

1. Martin Luther, *On Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed*, in Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther's Works: American Edition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955–1970), 45: 113.

help shape and sustain the English understanding of the monarch's position as head of the church.

Perhaps nowhere does Bullinger so clearly and forcibly articulate his understanding of this doctrine than in the seventh sermon of Vol. II of his *Decades*. This mighty five-volume tome, consisting of fifty lengthy "sermons," was written by Bullinger in 1549 and dedicated to the young Edward VI of England (r. 1547–1553) to help guide him in his reforming task. Volume II is dedicated primarily to an exposition of the Ten Commandments, and Sermons 6–8 relate to the sixth commandment, which Bullinger sees as the most suitable heading under which to treat the civil magistrate's duties. Bullinger considers the magistrate's religious responsibilities as important enough to spend one-half of Sermon 7 expounding them.

In this sermon, you will see his heavy methodological reliance on the Old Testament, reasoning that if Christ and the Apostles had intended for the New Testament church to chart a completely different course when it came to the role of magistrates, they would have said so. Moreover, he points out, from the earliest Christian Roman emperors on, Christian magistrates have understood their task vis-à-vis the church in terms not unlike those of Old Testament kings. Of course, we should be clear on what this task is. Bullinger is emphatic

that there is still a clear distinction of offices, denying "that we would have the king to preach, to baptize, and to minister the Lord's supper." Rather, it is an ordering role, taking thought for the external structure of the church and its temporal affairs, to ensure it is effectively governed, peaceable, and well provided for. Moreover, Bullinger defends the ministers' God-given responsibility to proclaim the Word of God to the king so that he knows how he ought to govern the church, although he does allow that if the ministers are slack, corrupt, or inattentive to the Word of God, the godly prince will go directly to the Scriptures for guidance and correct ungodly ministers accordingly.

The doctrine of the godly prince was certainly to create headaches for Protestant churches who found themselves stuck with ungodly princes, but it was not until centuries later that most Protestants took the step of removing ecclesiastical affairs from civil oversight.

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DECADES II.7: OF THE MAGISTRATE

HEINRICH BULLINGER

WHETHER THE CARE OF RELIGION
APPERTAIN TO HIM OR NO, AND WHETHER
HE MAY MAKE LAWS AND ORDINANCES
IN CASES OF RELIGION

The first and greatest thing that chiefly ought to be in a magistrate is easily perceived by the declaration of his office and duty. In my yesterday's sermon I shewed you what the magistrate is, how many kinds of magistrates there are, of whom the magistrate had his beginning, for what causes he was ordained, the manner and order how to choose peers, and what kind of men should be called to be magistrates. To this let us now add what the office and duty of a magistrate properly is.

The whole office of a magistrate seemeth to consist in these three points: to order, to judge, and to punish, of every one whereof I mean to speak severally in order as they lie. The ordinance of the magistrate is a decree made by him for maintaining of religion, honesty, justice, and

public peace: and it consisteth on two points: in ordering rightly matters of religion, and making good laws for the preservation of honesty, justice, and common peace. But before I come to the determining and ordering of religion, I will briefly, and in few words, handle their question which demand whether the care of religion do appertain to the magistrate as part of his office or no? For I see many that are of opinion that the care and ordering of religion doth belong to bishops alone, and that kings, princes, and senators ought not to meddle therewith.

[T]HE CATHOLIC VERITY TEACHETH THAT
THE CARE OF RELIGION DOTHS ESPECIALLY
BELONG TO THE MAGISTRATE, AND THAT
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ADVANCE RELIGION.

But the catholic verity teacheth that the care of religion doth especially belong to the magistrate, and that it is not in his power only, but his office and duty also to dispose and advance religion. For among them of old their kings were priests, I mean, masters and overseers of religion. Melchizedek, that holy and wise prince of the Canaanite people, who bare the type or figure of Christ our Lord, is wonderfully commended in the holy scriptures;

now he was both king and priest together. Moreover, in the book of Numbers, to Joshua, newly ordained and lately consecrated, are

the laws belonging to religion given up and delivered. The kings of Judah also, and the elect people of God, have for the well ordering of religion (as I will by examples anon declare unto you) obtained very great praise, and again, as many as were slack in looking to religion are noted with the mark of perpetual reproach. Who is ignorant that the magistrate's especial care ought to be to keep the commonweal in safeguard and prosperity? Which undoubtedly he cannot do unless he provide to have the word of God preached to his people and cause them to be taught the true worship of God, by that means making himself, as it were, the minister of true religion. In Leviticus and Deuteronomy the Lord doth largely set down the good prepared for men that are religious and zealous indeed, and reckoneth up on the other side the evil appointed for the condemners of true religion (Lev. 26, Deut. 28). But the good magistrate is commanded to retain and keep prosperity among his people, and to repel all kind of adversity. Let us hear also what the wise man, Solomon, saith in his Proverbs: "Godliness and truth preserve the king, and in godliness his seat is holden up." "When the just are multiplied, the people rejoice, and when the wicked ruleth, the people lamenteth. The king by judgment stablisheth his dominion, but a tyrant overthroweth it. When the wicked increase, iniquity is multiplied, and the just shall see their decay. Where the word of God is not preached, the people decay, but happy is he that keepeth the law" (Prov. 20:28, 29:2, 4, 16, 18). Whereby we gather, that they which would not have the care of religion to appertain to princes do seek and bring in the confusion of all things, the dissolution of princes and their people, and lastly, the neglecting and oppression of the poor.

Furthermore, the Lord commandeth the magistrate to make trial of doctrines, and to kill those that do stubbornly teach against the scriptures, and draw the people from the true God. The place is to be seen in the thirteenth of Deuteronomy God also forbade the magistrate to plant groves or erect images, as is to be seen in the seventeenth of Deuteronomy. And by those particularities he did insinuate things general, forbidding to ordain, to nourish, and set forth superstition or idolatry, wherefore he commanded to advance true religion, and so consequently it followeth that the care of religion belongeth to the magistrate. What may be thought of that moreover that the most excellent princes and friends of God among God's people did challenge to themselves the care of religion as belonging to themselves, insomuch that they exercised and took the charge thereof, even as if they had been ministers of the holy things? Joshua in the mount Ebal caused an altar to be builded, and fulfilled all the worship of God, as it was commanded of God by the mouth of Moses (Josh. 8:30). David, in bringing in and bestowing the ark of God in his place, and in ordering the worship of God, was so diligent that it is wonder to tell. So likewise was Solomon, David's son. Neither do I think that

any man knoweth not how much Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah labored in the reformation of religion, which in their times was corrupted and utterly defaced. The very heathen kings and princes are praised, because, when they knew the truth, they gave out edicts for the confirmation of true religion against blasphemous mouths...

And yet I know that everything doth not consequently follow upon the gathering of examples. But here we have, for the making good of our argument, an evident prophecy of Isaiah, who foretelleth that



CONSTANTINE THE GREAT, ANON.

kings and princes, after the times of Christ and the revealing of the gospel, should have a diligent care of the church and should by that means become the feeders and nurses of the faithful. Now it is evident what it is to feed and to nourish, for it is all one as if he should have said that they should be the fathers and mothers of the church. But he could not have said that rightly, if the care of religion did not belong to princes, but to bishops alone. The words of Isaiah are these: "Behold, I will stretch out my hand unto the Gentiles, and set up my token to the people, and they shall bring thee thy sons in their laps, and thy daughters on their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers, they shall fall before thee with their faces flat upon the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet," &c. Shall not we say, that all this is fully performed in some Christian princes? Among whom the first was the holy emperor Constantine, who, by calling a general council, did determine to establish true and sincere doctrine in the church of Christ, with a settled purpose utterly to root out all false and heretical phantasies and opinions...After him again, the holy emperors, Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius, make a decree and give out the edict in these very words: "We will and command all people that are subject to our gracious empire to be of that religion, which the very religion, taught and conveyed from Peter till now, doth declare that the holy apostle Peter did teach to the Romans." And so forward.

By this, dearly beloved, ye perceive how kings and princes among the people of the new Testament have been the foster-fathers and nourishers of the church, being persuaded that the care of religion did first of all and especially belong to themselves...

But, that we may have such a magistrate and such a life, the apostle commanded us earnestly to pray, where he saith: "I exhort you that, first of all, prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1, 2).

I am now again compelled to end my Sermon before the matter be finished. That which remaineth I will add tomorrow. Make ye your earnest prayers, with your minds lift up into heaven, &c.

THE SIEGE OF SHKODRA: ALBANIA'S COURAGEOUS STAND AGAINST OTTOMAN CONQUEST, 1478 BY MARIN BARLETI

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY DAVID HOSAFLOOK | ONUFRI PUBLISHING HOUSE, 2012

REVIEWED BY MARK OLIVERO

Less than two weeks after Martin Luther posted his *95 Theses* on the abuse of indulgences, Pope Leo X issued another call for indulgences. In early November of 1517 the papal bull, *Humani generis redemptor*, decreed with urgency the need for more indulgences. The content of Luther's concerns related to the construction of St. Peter's basilica. In this instance Leo X had in mind the financing of a crusade.¹ The resolve of this crusade was to confront the Western advance of the "Turcarum tyrannus" (the Turkish tyrant) and for that hour in history it was Selim the Grim.

David Hosaflook, Ph.D, is an American missionary in Albania and Executive Director of the Institute for Albanian and Protestant Studies. In this volume he gives the modern English audience a fascinating piece of back story to the 15th and 16th Turkish military threat. Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453. In 1529, the Battle of Vienna was a critical victory that impeded the Muslim takeover of Europe. Between these key dates Europeans heard or felt many times the convulsions of the Muslim conquest from Egypt to Turkey to Spain. This book tells of the valorous defense of the fortress city, ancient Shkodra, in the year 1478, despite eventual conquest.

The record of these events was first published by Catholic priest, Marin Barleti, in Latin under the same title, *The Siege of Shkodra* (1505). His book became a bestseller in the 16th century and was in short time translated into Italian, Polish and French (KL116). In his vivid English translation of Marin's account, Hosaflook includes a helpful introductory essay by David Abulafia, Professor of Mediterranean History at Cambridge University. Throughout the whole, Hosaflook provides explanatory footnotes and supplemental material that give the reader an "as if I had been there" experience. At times it seems as though we have been set in the middle of an episode of Tolkien's legendarium with talk of "two towers," description of wooden engines or "abundance of ladders" to scale the walls of Ro-

zafa Castle, "all kinds of catapults" releasing their fiery stones and hordes of infantry and cavalry encamped around the city.

Indicating the "strategic importance" of Shkodra, the Ottoman chronicler, Idris-I Bidlisi stated that it was "the hub around which the world revolved" (KL4006). The sultan who set his designs on Shkodra, Mahmed II the Conqueror, "boasted that he would not rest until he could stable his horses in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome" (KL379).

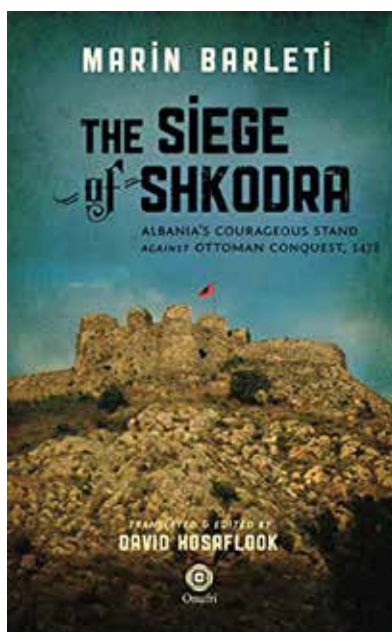
He made plain in his previous assault on Shkodra in 1474 that he must have their city if he would have the West. "When the Ottomans attacked the walls of Shkodra, their shrieking battle cry – reaching to the very heavens – was 'Roma, Roma!'" (KL586).

Thus, when his armies returned in 1478 he conducted the siege on Shkodra in person, a task he usually left to his commanders. Knowing this and aware that Shkodra was their geographic defense, the Senate of Vienna provided military leadership and supply support to this city on a hill. According to Barteli, an army of about 350,000 Turks converged on Shkodra, whose defenders numbered only 1,600.

In Luther's 1528 treatise, *On War with the Turk*, he put his Two Kingdoms theology into practical examination. He explained the distinction between "temporal government" and the Church which "ought not strive or fight with the sword." There is much wisdom in Luther's

categories. Yet, when overwhelmed by the din of battle and fetid smoke of combat, whether one was fighting for the temporal authority or serves the holy aims of the Church was difficult to separate within the man-at-arms in that era (KL810).

Barteli with plain repetition refers to "the Christians" who make their stand in the siege of Shkodra, though they were a diverse collection of women, strong youths, Italians and Albanians. As I read through Hosaflook's translation, I lost count of how many churches Barteli mentions, all of them bearing names of Christian significance. One of the most memorable moments in the siege is when the sultan's messengers "came to the market square that lies at the



1. Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571*, Volume 3. American Philosophical Society, 1984. 174. Some sources date the papal bull as November 11 and others at 14.

foot of the fortress” to deliver his ultimatum to the castle’s commander (KL1353). The reply from the Shkodrans in the person of Petrus Pagnamus rings with rousing ardor for God and country like that heard in St. Crispin’s Day speech. Pagnamus answered,

“Men and noble representatives of the sultan, be it known that among us are three categories of people—Italians, marine soldiers, and Shkodrans or Epirotes [another name for the Albanians] and we are all of one mind and heart. Among us is not even the slightest dissension because we are all Christians. ...we honor Christ, the Son of God, who will forever be One together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This, then, is the great God, the wonderful Creator and Sovereign over all... In that God have we placed our hope and trust. He will fight for us; he will save us from your sultan’s attack...”

Then with an echo of the prophet Daniel’s “But if not...,” Pagnamus brought his reply to its fullness.

“...Furthermore, we completely reject the rewards and gifts your prince is offering, for greater rewards await us from our Prince, who never abandons those who have discharged themselves well... With God’s help we shall either emerge triumphant together or perish together. Now should you be so brazen as to provoke us further, our reply shall be swords instead of words, and stones, arrows, spears, and every kind of artillery.”

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Later, when the Shkodrans were battle weary, Friar Bartholomew gave another speech woven with strains of loyalty to the Savior who spilled his blood for them and courage flowing from love of homeland. Marin Barleti went on to publish another best seller, *The History of Scanderbeg*, the record of heroism in the life of George Scanderbeg, Albanian nobleman and military leader. His bottomless nerve was a reviving symbol to the Shkodrans who later defended the same ground he did. In the original Albanian introduction to Barteli’s *Siege*, the Shkodrans are reported to be a people who “do not obey anyone other than those whom they choose” (KL793). As for how the Shkodrans were able to sustain their resources against such odds and how they were eventually betrayed by the indifference of others, you will find in

The Siege of Shkodra. We are reminded by this event that “winning the day of battle is not enough. You have to win the campaign, then the year, then the decade.”²

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2. Cathal Nolan, *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost*, 4.

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