

Reformation, Martin Luther (1483-154), Anti-Semitism and Islam

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Abstract

This study aims to present the philosophical-religious and political-social theses of Martin Luther, as well as the time-specific social construction in which his concepts were born. The research methodology is philosophical-historical, implying the following content of the text: Introduction; Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More – they are perceived as harbingers of free thought in Europe, but at the same time, in principle, both Erasmus and More remained to a greater or lesser extent convinced Catholics. It is no accident that most of their works are studies of religious texts; The Reformation was a consequence of violent socio-economic and political transformations; Martin Luther; A conclusion outlining the influence of Luther’s theses and how his teaching played an extremely important role in creating a paradigm in interfaith relations in the Middle Ages. The Reformation was not only the cause of the Western Schism (1374-1417), which modeled relations in Europe and the Christian world. It created a system of international relations, parts of whose profile leave imprints to this day.

Keywords: Reformation, Martin Luther, anti-Semitism, Islam.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 16th century, a new socio-political dynamic was noticed. The great geographical discoveries and the new manufacturing form of production strengthened the tendencies towards consolidation of the national territories and centralization of the state administration. This caused the change in Christian ideas about the state and law imposed by the Catholic Church. This is necessary since the last presented to Europeans dominated throughout the Middle Ages. The political conjuncture forms prerequisites for the creation and imposition of a new political-legal order. In this light, England, France and Spain created numerous feudal principalities with large centralized states. Germany alone, of the major European states, remains fragmented into about a thousand feudal units. This was the reason for a weaker opposition to the traditionally strong influence of the Holy Father North of the Alps.

However, before coming to the radical Reformation in Germany, it is necessary to note the stage of “Christian humanism.”¹ It is perceived as a kind of preparation for the final break with

¹ Nay, O., Histoire des idées politiques, La pensée politique occidentale de l’Antiquité à nos jours, 2e édition, Arman Colin, 2016, p. 226-227.

the Catholic Church, represented by the Holy Father in the Vatican. This period is represented by the ideas and teachings of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) and Thomas More (1478-1535). Their views are an eclectic mix of politics, philosophy, pedagogy, theology, morality, and jurisprudence, presented through the author's parables, dialogues, and annotated collections of Greek and Latin proverbs. The main works of the first are the treatises "In Praise of Madness," "Adagia," "The Education of a Christian Prince," "On Free Will" and others. The political-legal model that is the object of analysis is that of the empire of Charlemagne (747 or 748-814).²

2. Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More

Many modern experts perceive him as a harbinger of free thought in Europe. At the same time, in principle, Erasmus remained a convinced Catholic. It is no coincidence that most of his works are studies of religious texts, especially the Gospel. Erasmus' ideal state represents the ideal Corpus Christianum.³ The statist organism is built around Christ, who is the sole bearer of power, and his subjects are divided into three concentric circles – one large and two smaller. Closest to God is the high Christian clergy, next to them – are the minor clergy, and finally – the people. Between the two zones, which represent the ruling stratum in the state and the people, are the secular rulers. The latter, however, must rule according to God's norms. According to Erasmus, they are temporary, and the clergy – eternal. The two components of the elite (religious and secular) obey Christian morals and laws. "If the ruler is a Christian, he must follow the ideal of the Bible. In other words, he must imitate God and bear his cross first, and not aspire to the crown and the globe."⁴

Moreover, Erasmus questions the unquestioned authority of the secular leader. He challenged the principle that by submitting to the ruler, one submits to God: "Omnis potestas a Deo."⁵ Such a formula is inadmissible since it refers to the Roman rulers, and they are pagans. Along with this, concepts such as empire, kingdom, majesty, power and a number of other state-political terms were derived from the pagan vocabulary. Adequate terms in the Christian state are "administration," "prosperity," "loyal rule," and others.⁶

The Dutch philosopher categorically rejected war as a means of resolving disputes between nations. He criticizes Niccolò Machiavelli's thesis that the natural state of man and nations is war, as it contradicts the Bible. The best regulator of human collective relationships remains Christian values. In this regard, Erasmus ignored Machiavelli's opinion that a dividing line should be drawn between politics and religion. On the contrary, he believes that politics and morality should be mixed and become one substance. In this regard, the Dutchman is of the

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313188474_Histoire_des_idees_politiques_La_pensee_politique_occidentale_de_l'Antiquite_greco-romaine_a_nos_jours. 03.03.2023.

² Galily, D., The Humanism of the Renaissance as the Source of the Freemason Order, Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, Vol. 2, Issue 8, 2016.

³ The term corpus Christianum refers to the medieval understanding of the unity of state and church, of spiritual and secular dominion. According to him, the empire and the papacy were two powers in a single republic Christiana, embracing all Christendom, whose membership was mediated by baptism. The invisible, unifying head of this corpus mysticum is Jesus Christ. It is ruled by an emperor and a pope as heads of state. For more information see: de Wall, H., Corpus Christianum, in Religion Past and Present, BRILL, 2006-2013, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/religion-past-and-present/corpus-christianum-SIM_03244#, 03.03.2023.

⁴ Erasmus, D., The Manual of Christian Knight, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/erasmus-the-manual-of-a-christian-knight>, 03.03.2023.

⁵ Erasmus, D., The Education of a Christian Prince, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 61.

⁶ Op. cit.

opinion that power and the exercise of power are reduced to pedagogical functions and not to the search for specific material and social interests. The ruler rules by virtue, and his authority is legitimate when it is accepted by the subjects. According to Erasmus, the state is formed only when its ruler is educated and virtuous. The dominance of virtues and Christian culture constitute the basis of the necessity of the state-forming process. The relationship is two-way, namely, the state is proven through the Christian virtues, but the virtues also cannot exist without the state.⁷

His personal friend the Englishman Thomas More also left lasting traces in the pre-Reformation period. In his phenomenal treatise *Utopia*, he describes political schemes, governing structures and state institutions that do not actually exist. Entering into a sharp dispute with the authorities (King Henry VIII beheaded him), More brought to the fore the Neoplatonic dualism (bad-wrong-visible versus good-virtuous-invisible/heavenly) as the main approach in the state-forming process.

The English humanist raised the idea of a return to the Christian original sources. Inspired by them, the thinker reaches supreme erudition and succeeds in creating the perfect models of political governance and state administration. This brought the Utopians closer to the Epicureans, who believed that Christianity should return to its naturalistic foundations. More is convinced that in order to improve society, the state and the laws, first of all, man must make a revolution in his soul, since it is not subject to external pressure.⁸

Keywords for More's understanding of politics and jurisprudence are "family" and "property." In the initial stage, More, influenced by the ideas of Plato, allowed common ownership of women. Subsequently, however, he rejected the idea and raised the claim that society and the state he built was built on the family cell and traditional morality. Thus, the main unit in More's utopian state becomes the family. Most of a person's life takes place within it, and therefore the state can only intervene when an attack is made against it. All other crimes must be dealt with by a family tribunal. Thus, part of the criminal-legal functions of the state have been taken over by a family tribunal.

An important part of More's views and work is his negative attitude towards the Reformation. He found her ideas, as well as those of Martin Luther, too radical. According to him, the destruction of the Catholic Church is actually a "call for war."⁹ Thus, in parallel with the strong desire to reform the Catholic Church, the Counter-Reformation also appeared. The powerful reformation movement that emerged in Germany later encountered a decisive resistance organized by the Holy Father himself.

3. The Reformation was a consequence of violent socio-economic and political transformations

The formal occasion of the Reformation itself was the sale of indulgences¹⁰ and simony.¹¹

⁷ Nay, O., *Histoire des idées politiques*, ... op. cit.

⁸ Nay, O., *Histoire des idées politiques*, pp. 227-228.

⁹ Wegemer, G., *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Scepter Pubs, 1996, p. 136.

¹⁰ The forgiveness of sins for a fee.

¹¹ Buying and selling church offices. It comes from the name of Simon the Wise, who was a contemporary of the apostles. He is also called Simon the Magician or Simon the Magus. According to the "Acts of the Holy Apostles", a book of the New Testament, he lived in the 1st century in Samaria and tried to buy a church post. Thus he created a precedent that became a practice among the clergy. The ancient Christian thinkers Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and others considered him to be the originator of all church

Such collection of money, resting on a deeply corrupt basis, was argued by Pope Leo X from the necessity of the reconstruction of the church “St. Peter” in Rome. People who wanted to reform the Catholic Church saw this as a deep crisis and found corruption permeating the entire Church hierarchy, including their own Holy Father.¹²

Attempts at reform fail. Her first acts like Jan Huss and John Wycliffe are either destroyed or humiliated. It reached the Western Schism (1378-1416), the consequences of which were clashes between individual rulers and social riots. In fact, the Reformation set the religious components of the emerging nation-states.

The Reformation is a consequence of burning socio-economic and political transformations in the bowels of European society. They are helped by an unprecedented global cataclysm; a pandemic called the Black Plague. The disease was first recorded in 1320 in China. The infestation is believed to be spread by oriental fleas that survive in the fur of black rats. The latter lived in the merchant ships that traveled over 6,000 km from Europe. The bacteria causing the Black (Bubonic) Plague were transmitted by the fleas in question.

Spreading along the Silk Road, it reached the Crimea, then Europe, especially the Mediterranean region. The plague arrived in Europe in 1347. The following year it was noted in Sicily and Venice. Then Italy, Spain and France quickly flare up. By 1349, the plague had spread to Western Europe, particularly Germany, and was rapidly engulfing the population of Central Europe. In 1350, the pandemic reached Eastern Europe, and in 1351-1353 it was already in Russia.

It is estimated that about 60% of Europeans died from the plague. By the time the disease reached Europe, the world’s population had dropped from 450 to 350 million. At the same time, 40% of the population of Egypt, 50% of Paris, and 60% of Germany met their demise. The statistics for England are similar. The plague kills one in three Englishmen. It took Europe 150 years to fully recover from the plague.

At first, many people believed that God sent the plague as a punishment for the sins of the people. Then they turn to the Catholic Church for protection, as it has been up to this point. Along with this, they accuse the Jews of being the cause of the misfortune and begin cruel persecutions of non-believers. Over time, however, the ecclesiastical institution began to lose public trust as the pandemic persisted. Up to this point, it has had a complete monopoly over public life and political processes, as it is the pillar of public trust. The Cleric can no longer explain the occurrence and cure of the plague. The priests form the so-called “front line” as they remain closest to the people. The church itself is losing its material and physical support and due to the fact that tens of thousands of its members are dying healing people.¹³

Thus, the Black Death became the cause of provoking two extremely important social consequences. First, a massive depopulation occurs, which directly reflects on the economic life of Europe. Second, a complete erosion of public loyalty to the centuries-old monopolist of European politics – the Catholic Church. Moreover, serious personnel changes are taking place in the clergy itself. The place of the deceased clerics is taken by their less educated and less prepared successors, who do not possess the moral qualities of the previous generation of representatives of the Holy See. In this way, a huge socio-political vacuum is created in Europe, the filling of which can only

heresies. For more information see: Simon Magus, Catholic Encyclopedia, New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13797b.htm>, 11.03.2021.

¹² Galily, Daniel. “THE APOSTLE PETER IN THE JEWISH SOURCES: ‘THE DOUBLE AGENT.’”, In: A COLLECTION OF SCHOLARLY PAPERS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE, University of National and World Economy (UNWE), 2019.

¹³ The Reformation, <http://protestantreformationcs.weebly.com/the-black-death.html>, 03.03.2023.

be realized by a factor whose real political dimension is an alternative to the theocentric state institutionalized by the Vatican.

The alternative in question had to create first a new economic environment, and then a political construction. The latter cannot be a total denial of the theocentric state, but the formation of an ideology that is religious in nature, but with a strongly de-Catholicized and respectively centralized content. Thus, the new economic order based on industrialization and mechanization had to be argued by a new, “secular” religion, the core of which was the secularization and privatization of church orders, i.e., the abolition of the papal ritual and the creation of its familiar substitute.

Reasons for the emergence of the new socio-political-religious movement called the Reformation, as well as the specifics of the geographical spread of Protestantism, can be summarized as follows:

- The powerful wave of industrialization and mechanization created a number of industrial innovations that replaced the labor of the millions who died in the Black Death pandemic. One of these innovations is the Swedish Gutenberg’s printing press. It became the cause of a wide spread of knowledge, and from there the emergence of a strong middle class that opposed the clergy and the secular aristocracy. By 1530, more than 10,000 religious publications with over ten million copies flooded the book market in Germany. In them, the reformers strongly attacked the “bad” church and propagated the “good” church;¹⁴
- Reformation literature spread more actively in cities with large book markets, which were also more inclined to accept the Protestant denomination, at the expense of Catholicism;
- The Ottoman-Turkish raids in Western Europe during the period 1450-1700 became one of the regulators for the momentary blunting or sharpening of the confrontation between Reformation and Counter-Reformation. According to the Turkish researcher Murad Ligun, when there was a Turkish offensive against an object in Western Europe, 25% of the conflicts between the two Christian denominations decreased;¹⁵
- Protestants and Ottoman Turks, professing Islam, became de facto allies against the pillar of the Christian religion – the Vatican. The period in which the two sieges of Vienna took place (the first was 1529 and the second was 1683) was the period of active attacks by Protestants against their co-religionists – Catholics;
- Cities that were the center of a strong cult of individual Christian saints were less enthusiastic about accepting the ideas of the Reformation.¹⁶

The settlements in which the law or tradition was practiced, that the entire inheritance of the testator should be inherited by the first-born or the first-born daughter, were less receptive to the ideas of the Reformation.¹⁷

¹⁴ Dittmar, J., Media, Markets and Institutional Change: Evidence from the Protestant Reformation, CEP Discussion Paper № 1267, August 2015, <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1367.pdf>, 27.3.2020.

¹⁵ Iyigun, M., Luther and Suleyman, The Quarterly of Economics, Vol. 123, Issue 4, November 2008, p. 1465-1494, <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article/123/4/1465/1933179>, 03.03.2023.

¹⁶ Ekelund, R., Hebert, R., R, Tollison, An Economic Analysis of the Protestant Reformation, 1.06.2002, Journal of Political Economy, http://web.stanford.edu/~avner/Greif_228_2005/Ekelund%20et%20al%202002%20JPE%20Reformati on.pdf, 03.03.2023.

¹⁷ Curuc, M., S., Smulders, Malthus meets Luther: the Economics behind the German Reformation, September 30, 2019,

4. Martin Luther

The undisputed leader of the Reformation is the German Augustinian monk Martin Luther (1483-1546). In 1510 he visited Rome and was shocked by the incredible corruption that had unfolded among the Catholic clergy in light of the reigns of Popes Sixtus IV (1471-1484) and Alexander VI (1492-1503).¹⁸ Despite the reluctance of his middle-class father, Luther studied biblical studies and later became a professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg. He has a wonderful academic career.

Luther created the leading trend in the Reformation, called Magisterial, in contrast to the Radical, symbolized by his ideological opponent Thomas Münzer (1489-1525), Andreas Karlstadt (1486-1541), the Zwickau prophets and the Anabaptists. The main difference between the two schools was whether the corruption was only among the Catholic Church (Martin Luther) or it also covered the secular rulers, who were also subject to trial (Thomas Münzer).¹⁹

The work “95 Theses Against Indulgences,” written in 1517 by Luther, became a programmatic document of the Reformation. In it, he clearly states his fundamental disagreements with papal principles and practices. Its main points are:

- Forgiveness of sins is by faith, not by works. The church may not be the judge of man;
- People’s relationship with God is personal and the Church cannot be their Intermediary;
- The authority of faith is built on the word of God and the Holy Scriptures, not on papal practice;
- Man’s inner religiosity is achieved with secular orders. This means that secular authority is based on natural, not divine right.

According to Luther, the state must function on the rules of practical expediency and real interests, which are determined by reason. Along with this, the monarch is a servant and not a ruler of the people. In this way, Martin Luther calls for violence against the Church and submission to secular authority. He summarizes that, in fact, rebellion against the feudal lord is tantamount to rebellion against the Church, since the secular ruler has taken her place in the management of society and the state.²⁰

Martin Luther’s aspirations were shaped into a complete philosophy, which was labeled “Lutheranism.” This designation was imposed by one of Luther’s opponents, namely the German scholastic theologian Dr. Johann Meyer von Eck. This happened in July 1519 during the debate in Leipzig. The latter uses it with an ironic connotation, in order to suggest that Luther’s teaching is heresy.²¹ At this time Luther disliked the term “Lutheran,” preferring the term

<https://docs.google.com/a/tilburguniversity.edu/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxtYWxpazN1cnVrfGd4OjUwMWYwNTkzMGM1MDcxNjE>, 03.03.2023.

¹⁸ Brecht, M., J. F. Schaaf, Martin Luther, Fortress Press, 1993, p. 7.

¹⁹ The first Anabaptist preachers in Germany – were Nikolaus Storch, Thomas Drechsel and Markus Thome. That’s what Martin Luther called them in December 1521. For more information see: Hughes O., O., The Shaping of the Baptismal Rite in the Sixteen Century, William Eardmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992, <https://books.google.bg/books?id=NooRWj1hXTEC&pg=P>, 03.03.2023.

²⁰ Wengert, T., Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses: With Introduction, Commentary, and Study Guide, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2005.

²¹ Espín, O., J., Nickoloff, An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies, Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2003, p. 796.

“evangelical,” which is derived from εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion), a Greek word meaning “good news,” i.e. “Gospel.”²²

Followers of John Calvin (1509-1564), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and other theologians associated with the Reformation tradition (Calvinism) also began to use this term. In this way, they begin to distinguish between the two evangelical groups. Other philosophers use the terms “Evangelical Lutheran” and “Evangelical Reformed” respectively. Gradually, the word “evangelical” dropped out, and from the middle of the 16th century, the Lutherans themselves began to use the term “Lutheran” for themselves. They aim to distinguish themselves from Calvinists or Anabaptists. In 1597 the Wittenberg theologians defined the term “Lutheran” as synonymous with the “true church.”

An extremely important nuance in Lutheran philosophy is its anti-Semitic focus. Parallel to this, a certain sympathy is felt for Muslims. The reasons for this type of distinction between the two non-Christian monotheistic religions are both objective and subjective in nature. Luther's initial views of the Jews were not hostile. He tries to win them over to the Christian religion and therefore has a very positive view of them. Luther wrote: “Absurd theologians defend hatred of the Jews. ... What Jew would agree to join our ranks when he sees the cruelty and enmity we display towards them, and that in our behavior towards them, we are less like Christians than beasts?”²³ Luther's anti-Semitism is expressed in two of his works. The first, the leading one, is the pamphlet entitled “On the Jews and Their Lies.” The second is “Of the Unknown Name and Generations of Christ,” which was reprinted five times during his lifetime. The two works were written in 1543, three years before his death. It is believed that Martin Luther was strongly influenced by the Hebraist Anton Margarita's book (1500-...) “The Whole Jewish Faith.” In fact, the latter is a former Jew whose father was a rabbi. He converted to Christianity and subsequently became a Lutheran. In her book, Margarita exposes the Jews and their manners, customs and beliefs. The influence of the work in question was an additional argument for Luther's preliminary anti-Semitic sentiments. The latter entered into a dispute with Rabbi Yosel of Rosenheim, who sought Luther's mediation before the Prince of Saxony Johann Frederick, but the Christian thinker refused him. The prince points to the fact that all his attempts to convert the Jews have failed.

In one of the paragraphs of “On the Jews and Their Lies” Luther suggests that they be expelled from Christendom since they cannot be converted.²⁴

He openly says this: “We want to deal with them in a Christian way now. Offer them the Christian faith that they will accept the Messiah, who is even their cousin and born of their flesh and blood; and rightly, that he is of Abraham's seed, of whom they boast. However, I am concerned [that] the Jewish blood may now become watery and wild. First, you must offer them to turn to the Messiah and allow themselves to be baptized, so that one can see that this is a serious matter for them. If not, then we would not allow them [to live among us], for Christ commands us to be baptized and believe in Him, though now we cannot believe as strongly as we should, God is still patient with us. If, however, they turn, abandon their usury, and receive Christ, then we will

²² Op. cit., p. 362.

²³ Luther, M., That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew, Trans. Walter I. Brandt, in Luther's Works, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962, pp. 200-201, 229.

²⁴ Deutsch, G., Martin Luther, Jewish Encyclopedia, St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, 1955-86, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10196-luther-martin>, 30.03.2020.

willingly count them as our brethren. Otherwise, nothing will come of it, because they do this with great desire.”²⁵

The influence of Luther’s ideas remained too strong even after his death. Many of the German feudal lords imposed restrictions on Jews living in their principalities. In 1572 Lutherans attacked and looted the Berlin Synagogue. The following year, the Jews were expelled from the entire Margraviate of Brandenburg, which became the cause of anti-Jewish riots in a number of German Lutheran principalities.²⁶ According to the American scholar of Lutheranism, Robert Michael, the works of Martin Luther became a guide for public behavior and a textbook for administrative practices in Germany, although not all princes adopted them.²⁷

In this light, in 1570, pastor Georg Nygrin published “The Enemy Jew,” which practically repeats Luther’s views, which he espoused in his *On the Jews and Their Lies*.

Undoubtedly, Martin Luther’s anti-Jewish rhetoric created an environment conducive to the spread of anti-Semitic sentiment throughout Germany. Lutheranism, which became the official Christian doctrine in most German regions, became a great public legitimization of the pogroms that the Nazi Party organized in the 1930s and 1940s against the Jews and their cult objects and properties. According to Michael, anyone who wrote against the Jews during the Third Reich always referred to the works of Luther.²⁸ English Christian Church scholar Diarmaid McCulloch argues that “Luther’s 1543 pamphlet was the Nazis’ operational plan for the Nazis’ bloody pogrom against the Jews called Kristallnacht.”²⁹

Christopher Probst, in his book “Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany,” argues that a large number of German Protestant clergy and theologians during the Nazi Third Reich used Luther’s anti-Jewish writings to justify, at least in part, anti-Semitic policies and practices of the National Socialists.³⁰

Still, differences remain between individual scholars of Lutheranism and Nazism regarding the roots of their anti-Semitism. If Martin Luther used purely religious arguments to condemn the Jews, the fascists of the Third Reich emphasized racial motives. Thus, at the genesis of this absentee controversy is posed a single question that many scholars of the Middle East hostile to Israel bring to the fore in their anti-Semitism, namely: “Are the Jews a confessional community or a distinct race?” According to scholars such as Roland Beighton, Paul Halsall, Heiko Obermann, and others advance the thesis of a “dull” Lutheran anti-Semitism that is not constructed in an imperative form, as the Nazis did. In reality, Lutheranism issued a conditional denial of the Jews, while the Third Reich physically exterminated them. Luther tries to fight for his “pure” Christianity, in which he sets his conditions for the Jews, namely conversion and the

²⁵ Luther’s Works, Pelikan, J., Lehmann, H., T., C., B., Brown, B.T.G. Mayes, Digital Download, <https://www.fortresspress.com/store/product/9780800603595/Luther-Works-Digital-Download>, 31.3.2020.

²⁶ Michael, R., *Holy Hatred: Christianity, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 117.

²⁷ Michael, R., *Luther, Luther Scholars and Antisemitism*, *Encounter* (Fall 1985), Vol. 46, Issue 4, pp. 339-356.

²⁸ Michael, R., *Holy Hatred: Christianity, Antisemitism*, p. 57-60.

²⁹ MacCulloch, D., *Reformation: Europe’s House Divided, 1490-1700*, New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 2004, pp. 666–667.

³⁰ Probst, Ch., *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany*, Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2012.

recognition of the Christian Messiah. According to American researcher Graham Noble, Luther even “tried to save the Jews.”³¹

For Luther, salvation depended on the belief that Jesus was the son of God, a belief that the adherents of Judaism did not share. Early in his life, Luther claimed that the Jews were prevented from accepting Christianity by the proclamation of what he believed. The latter believes that the “impure” gospel of the Catholic Church has turned them away and that they will respond favorably to the gospel message if it is presented to them “gently.” Luther expressed concern about the poor conditions in which the Jews were forced to live and held that anyone who denied that Jesus was born a Jew was committing heresy.³²

Martin Luther’s attitude towards the Islamic religion and the Turks is ambiguous. As if it remains conjectural, difficult to understand and even contradictory. On the one hand, the view of the ideologist of the Reformation was strongly influenced by the principles of the religious-ideological rejection of other believers. On the other hand, he probably realized clearly that the Ottoman Empire was the strongest opponent militarily of his enemy, the Pope, and thus, to some extent, solved an existential question for the new Christian denomination. It is possible that the instinct of self-preservation “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” has worked. Interpretations of Luther's assessment of Muslims also remain in this dichotomous light. If European and American researchers related to clerical circles (e.g., Michael Mullett, Martin Marty, Andrew Cunningham and others) who are close to Lutheranism maintain the first thesis, while Islamic scholars or those whose publications come out with the help of Islamic means (for example, Murad Igyun, Trevor Caster and others) emphasize the second. Perhaps Volker Greifenhagen’s analysis of Luther College at the University of Regina is a great attempt at mixing the two trends and finding the necessary realistic balance. The leading arguments for defending the first, anti-Islamic position of Luther are the two treatises “On the War against the Turks” (1529), “Military Oath against the Turks” (1530), and the beginning of the Lutheran hymn, which says: “Lord, keep us in Your Word and deed, restrain the murderous Pope and Turk.”³³

Perhaps the duality of the attitude towards the Turks is evident even in Luther’s programmatic work, namely the “95 Theses”. During the Magbur colloquium, held in the period 1-4 October 1529 (dispute between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli about the real presence of Christ in the Holy Communion) Luther questioned the need to resist the army of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, besieging Vienna. A number of Christian thinkers see in his position defeatism in front of fellow believers. Luther recognized “the Turks as a scourge sent by God to punish Christians, in their capacity as instruments of the biblical Apocalypse, which will destroy the Antichrist, and in the latter Luther recognized the papacy and the Church of Rome.”³⁴

³¹ Noble, G., Martin Luther and German Anti-Semitism, History Today,

<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-83552696/martin-luther-and-german-anti-semitism-graham-noble>, 03.03.2023.

³² Berenbaum, M., The World Must Know, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1991, pp. 8-9.

³³ Greifenhagen, V., Why Did Luther Want the Qur’an to Be Published?, Luther College, University Regina, 5 March 2027, <https://www.luthercollege.edu/university/academics/impetus/winterspring-2017/table-talks/why-did-luther-want-the-quran-to-be-published/>, 1.04.2020.

³⁴ Cunningham, A., The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 141, https://books.google.bg/books?id=hLxDnAMaUgQC&pg=PA141&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false, 03.03.2023.

He consistently rejects the idea of a holy war, “as if our nation is an army of Christians against the Turks, who are enemies of Christ. This is absolutely contrary to Christ’s teaching and name.”³⁵

On the other hand, maintaining his doctrine of the two kingdoms, Luther supported the irreligious war against the Turks. In 1529 he actively urged Emperor Charles V and the German people to wage a world war against the Turks. Luther makes it clear, however, that religious warfare against an unknown faith is separate and must be waged through prayer and repentance. At the time of the siege of Vienna, Luther wrote a prayer for national liberation from the Turks, asking God to “give our emperor eternal victory over our enemies.”³⁶

In 1581 Luther wrote a treatise *On the Religious Customs of the Turks*. His authorship is essential since at that time a work with the content of a certain George of Hungary was published. The latter was captured by the Turks when he was 16 years old and spent 20 years in a Turkish prison. This work of Luther’s is both an apologetic of Islamic religious rites and customs and an attack on Roman Catholic religious rites and customs. The author even makes a direct comparison between the two rituals. He contrasts the religious emotion, discipline, and simplistic nature of Islam with the clumsiness and obscurity of the dead ritual practices of Catholicism. However, if we were to make an explicit comparison, we would see much more hatred for the Catholic Church than sympathy for Muslim traditions and cults.³⁷

The openness of the founder of Lutheranism to Islam is also confirmed by the writing in 1543 of an introduction to a translation of the Koran into Latin. The thinker himself insisted that this version of the Qur’an be published, despite the troubles that its publisher Johannes Oporines (1507-1568) had with the city council of Basel. From his letter to the commoners, as well as from the preface to the Muslim holy book, it is clear that Luther wanted the Koran to be published in order to “expose” it. In his judgment as a work it is full of “lies, fables, and abominations compared to the Christian scriptures.”³⁸

Along with this, he explains the advantages of studying non-Christian religions. According to Luther, this will only strengthen “the faith of Christians against the corruption of other religions, which all prejudice to be the work of Satan.”³⁹

5. Conclusion

Luther and his teachings played an extremely important role in creating the paradigm of interfaith relations during the Middle Ages. The Reformation was not only the cause of the Western Schism (1374-1417), which modeled relations in Europe and the Christian world. She created a system of international relations, part of whose profile leaves traces to this day. The Protestant Lutherans became one of the strongest opponents of Catholicism, breaking the religious-political unity of the Western world. Logically, they ideologized and stated their doctrine, crafting their own ritualistic and theological principles that evolved from those of the Mother Church. A very valuable feature is the fragmenting of Protestantism into multiple currents that often have

³⁵ Luther, M., *On War against the Turk*, 1529, cit. by Brown, W., *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 258, https://books.google.bg/books?id=87hQ2AjcttEC&pg=PA258&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false, 03.03.2023.

³⁶ Op. cit., p. 142.

³⁷ Castor, T., *Martin Luther on Islam and the “Turks”*, Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies, <http://www.zwemercenter.com/martin-luther-on-islam-and-the-turks/>, 03.03.2023.

³⁸ Greifenhagen, V., *Why did Luther, op. cit.*

³⁹ Op. cit.

common components and flow into each other. An extremely important distinguishing mark between the individual currents is the interpretation of specific perceptions of messianism and millennialism. To some extent, they become a kind of distributive mechanism for relations with non-Christian denominations, and from there for the development of a paradigm of the state's foreign policy, in the foundation of which the specific Protestant denomination stands. A very important point in Protestantism is not only the pragmatization of religious customs but also their secularization based on the characteristics of individual European nations. This is true even of individual Protestant denominations. Such are the Lutherans in Europe and those in the United States. An example in this regard is the interrelationships with Jews and Muslims. Luther sets the following gradation of his religious dislike for other denominations: Catholicism-anti-Semitism-Islam. It is possible to hypothesize that in this way Luther set the future model of multiculturalism, based on the permissibility between Protestantism and Islam, at the expense of Judaism. Perhaps there is some grain of rationality in such a statement.

Luther's hatred of the Jews cannot serve as a model for relations between them and Christians. Moreover, Luther himself cannot be a good model even for building a successful paradigm of Christian-Muslim relations. In fact, Luther's approach to Islam serves more as a warning to the "others," i.e., the non-Lutherans. The German theologian shows what his followers can achieve if engagement and dialogue are not achieved with them and if their positions are not accepted. Irredentist tension and destructive stereotypes of behavior follow.

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