



Martin Luther – Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam: *Preface to the Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum (1530), and Preface to Bibliander's Edition of the Qur'an (1543)*

SARAH HENRICH *and* JAMES L. BOYCE

*Luther Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota*

I. INTRODUCTION: LUTHER ON "THE TURKS"

IN THE FIRST OF HIS WELL-KNOWN 95 THESES OF 1517, MARTIN LUTHER WROTE, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent,' He called for the entire life of believers to be one of penitence."¹ Luther's call for the centrality of repentance in the life of the Christian signals a key perspective in the theology of the reformer. To judge from his writings on the subject, that same key theological concern for Christian repentance shaped and characterized his attitude toward and understanding of the religion of Islam expressed throughout his career. For the encouragement of Christian repentance and prayer was Luther's primary rationale for his actions to support and secure the publication of the 1543 edition

¹*Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961) 490. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the German and Latin in this article are by the authors. Citations from the works of Martin Luther are: *WA* = German Weimar Edition of Luther's works; *LW* = American Edition of Luther's works.

JAMES BOYCE and SARAH HENRICH are professors of New Testament. Professor Boyce, a former editor of Word & World, has had varied service in the church and maintains an interest in philology and archaeology. He is co-translator of Mark the Evangelist (W. Marxsen). Professor Henrich has had experience in general education as well as theological education. Her study of "Who Is Jesus?" is available as part of the proceedings (six cassettes) of the 1995 Luther Seminary Convocation.

of the Qur'ān edited by Theodor Bibliander, for which Luther in late 1542 also wrote the preface presented below in a new translation from the Latin.

As was the case with most issues he was called upon to address, Luther's remarks on Islam were extensive. Still his writings about "the Turks" or the "religion of Muhammad," as he regularly puts it, reveal a rather limited perspective. That limited knowledge was in turn stretched by constant political and social pressures on him to respond pastorally and theologically in the midst of the intense state of fear that lay over church and state in Christian Europe in the face of the military threat of Turkey under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.² In 1453 Muhammad II had captured Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire and beginning a spread of Ottoman control into Europe over the next century. It was this continuing threat that accounted for the fact that much of Luther's knowledge of Muslim religion and customs came primarily from secondhand reports about the Turkish enemies. Most frightening and immediate to Luther's concerns were the conquest by Sultan Suleiman I (1520-1566) of much of Hungary at the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, followed by the unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1529. The threat did not end, however, and Europe remained feverish over a possible return, a fear

²For a survey discussion of Luther's attitude and knowledge about the Muhammadan Turks, see C. Umhau Wolf, "Luther and Mohammedanism," *The Moslem World* 31 (1941) 161-177, and Egil Grisliis, "Luther and the Turks, Parts I & II," *The Muslim World* 64 (1974) 180-193 and 275-291.

Martin Luther's remarkable involvement with Islam and Muslims (= Turks") is insufficiently known. For this reason his prefaces to the "Book of the Rites and Customs of the Turks" and to "Bibliander's Edition of Alcoran" have been newly translated and are presented here.

Luther was a person of his time, and his language expresses the roughness of the age. It is not helpful to point out that most commentators of his time were far less informed and much more diatribal than Luther. It is better to remind ourselves that here we have an aspect of the "burdensome past" which calls us to penitence and apology.

All the same, Luther was far ahead of his time, and is helpful to us in reminding us of the importance of the Islamic reality. He expressed regret that scholars were not seeking to study and understand Islam in its own terms. Above all he points us to the essential distinctiveness of the gospel message of the free gift of forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life from a gracious God. Perhaps he might approve of this special issue. Perhaps, too, if he were here he might say, "Let us be little Christs to the Muslims."

As little Christs we are called upon in advance to express regret to Muslim readers who might be offended by the intemperate language, even as we recognize that we may all learn from our respective histories.

As far as is known, the two prefaces are translated into English for the first time, and appreciation is extended to Professors Henrich and Boyce for their dedicated efforts.

which indeed materialized in 1540 when Suleiman, seizing the opportunity of an invitation to intervene in a dispute over succession at the death of King John Zapolya of Hungary, invaded Hungary and brought it under his rule.

Throughout this period, guided by his perspective of the two realms, civil and spiritual, and the duties appropriate to each, Luther repeatedly argued for the obligation of obedience to all secular authority as instituted by God for the preservation of order, going so far as to say, even if it be the authority of Turkish captors. Accordingly, Luther was often charged with being responsible for a perceived reluctance on the part of Lutherans to fight against the Turkish invaders and thus for hindering good morale on the part of the defenders of Europe. At the same time Luther's writings consistently show him to have been more concerned with Christians at home than with the Turk, with matters of theodicy and with a call for contrition and inward preparation on the part of a Christian population in great need of repentance before the present catastrophe, which he saw to be the punishment of God. This latter perspective was already clear in his 1518 remarks in defense of the 95 Theses: "To fight against the Turk is the same as resisting God, who visits our sin upon us with this rod."³ In his later *On War Against the Turk* of 1529, Luther used similar language, describing the Turk as "the rod of God's wrath" by which "God is punishing the world." This conviction led him to call for leaders who would exhort the people "to repentance and prayer" because "we have earned God's wrath and disfavor, so that he justly gives us into the hands of the devil and the Turk."⁴ Such a view was repeated in various ways but essentially unchanged in Luther's numerous comments and correspondence and in his major published pieces about "the Turks" from 1528 through 1542. These works include:

On War Against the Turk (1529), a pastoral piece written to teach people how to fight with a clear conscience (LW 46:157-205);

Heerpredigt wider den Türken (*Sermon Against the Turks*, 1529), preached in the spring in light of the Turkish threat on Vienna (WA 30/2:160-197);

Vorwort zu dem Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum (*Preface to Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum*, 1530), a preface accompanying his publication of a "tract on the religion and customs of the Turks" written around 1481 – a new translation of this preface from the Latin is presented below in Part II (WA 30/2:205-208);

Appeal for Prayer Against the Turks (1541), written to encourage resistance on the occasion of the resurgence of Turkish threats to Germany with Suleiman's conquest of Hungary (LW 43:215-241);

Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi, Prediger Ordens (*Refutation of the Alcoran of Brother Richard, Preaching Order*, 1542), a translation into German of a medieval tract against Islam (WA 53:272-396);

and, finally, the second piece newly translated from the Latin here in Part III:

³*Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, LW 31:91-92.

⁴*On War Against the Turk*, LW 46:170-71.

Vorrede zu Theodor Biblianders Koranausgabe (Preface to Theodor Bibliander's Edition of the Qur'an, 1543, WA 53:569-572).

Although silent about the matter of the Turks until 1528, Luther was finally forced by current events and the urgings of friends to put something into writing. In the resulting *On War Against the Turk*, he sought to help innocent consciences so that they would not be “deceived into believing that we must not fight against the Turks.”⁵ But such resistance, he argued, was not the duty of everyone. A proper distinction in callings and offices was necessary so that everyone could see what duties God had called them to fulfill.⁶ Since the Turks were attacking lands that were not theirs and thus not for protection or for the sake of peace, it was clear that the Turks, as much as they were agents of God’s punishment, were also a servant of the devil. In such a situation the only persons who had the proper office of making war against the Turk were the common Christian citizen and the Emperor, Charles V. Yet even Christians could do so with a clear conscience only after sincere repentance and amending of their evil ways, an act which would take the “rod” of punishment out of God’s hand and leave to the Turks only their role as an agent of the devil.⁷ The emperor was called to fight purely and simply in his divinely given office of protecting and defending his subjects, not as defender of the gospel or of the faith. Luther thus explicitly opposed all attempts at inciting war from wrath or revenge against the Turk, or from self-seeking desires for honor, glory, or extension of territory. In fact he went so far as to say, if the emperor’s task were really “to destroy unbelievers and non-Christians, he would have to begin with the pope, bishops, and clergy, and perhaps not spare us or himself.”⁸

It is perhaps to be admired that in the course of his discussion Luther thus called for a true or honest representation of the enemy to be fought. Nevertheless, there is also need for caution about what he says because the basic details of his attitude and knowledge about the Turks that emerge from his remarks make it clear that religion and customs were not always carefully distinguished in Luther’s mind. Furthermore, the source of his views is often unclear or even strangely contradictory. For example, in his 1529 *On War Against the Turk*, as support for his statements he pointed to the Qur’ān, likening it to a book of sermons or doctrines like the decretals of the pope. He went on to assert that he was sure of the points he made “from the Koran of the Turks,” and that he would not bring up other things he had heard because he could not be sure of their accuracy.⁹ Yet in his somewhat later preface to the “Libellus” of 1530 he could still promise that he would say more if he ever got his hands on a copy of the Qur’ān,¹⁰ and in his preface to his 1542 translation of Brother Richard’s refutation of the Qur’ān Luther remarked

⁵LW 46:162.

⁶Ibid., 166.

⁷Ibid., 170-74.

⁸Ibid., 185-86.

⁹Ibid., 176, 182.

¹⁰WA 53:208. Plura forte dicam siquando mihi ipse Mahomethus Alkoranusque suus in manus venerit.

that he had only first come upon a copy of the Qur'ān in a poor Latin translation on Shrove Tuesday of 1542.¹¹

It is in *On War Against the Turk* that we get perhaps the fullest summary of Luther's basic notions of the religion of Muhammad and of Muslim customs as he saw them in the Ottoman Turkish enemy. Luther argued that the Turk was a threat to the Christian in three estates: the spiritual, the temporal, and in the estate of marriage or the home. He described the Muslim religion as a patchwork taken from Jewish, Christian, and heathen sources in which "Father, Son, Holy Ghost, baptism, the sacrament, gospel, faith, and all Christian doctrine and life are gone, and instead of Christ only Mohammed with his doctrine of works and especially the sword is left."¹² Secondly, Luther saw the Qur'ān as the basis of a creed that compelled the use of the sword through which temporal government with its maintenance of peace, protection of the good, and punishment of the wicked was destroyed. "With lies he kills souls and with murder he kills bodies."¹³ Thirdly, Luther lifted up the practice among the Turks of having many wives as a destruction of the estate of marriage and the home. In sum, the Turk is a "destroyer, enemy and blasphemer of our Lord Jesus Christ, a man who instead of the gospel and faith sets up his shameful Mohammed and all kinds of lies, ruins all temporal government and home life or marriage, and his warfare, which is nothing but murder and bloodshed, is a tool of the devil himself."¹⁴

Whatever must be granted in Luther's language in this document to the context, to the extremities of the political situation, and the rhetoric of war, still in the almost contemporary work included below in Part II we see a much more balanced discussion. In this 1530 preface that accompanied his publication of the *Libellus*, a tract "on the religion and customs of the Turks"¹⁵ written some seventy years earlier, Luther offered a rationale for his support of its publication. In so doing he praised the author of the tract for not having followed the lead of others in selecting all the most base and absurd matters from the Qur'ān with which to arouse the hatred and ill-will of the masses, but rather having faithfully presented both the evils and the best characteristics of the Turks. Luther thereby argued in support of an honest search for the truth so that whatever refutation was done might be done sincerely and faithfully. Thus he could contrast the splendid religious ceremonies, the discipline, and the simple and modest life-style of the Turks, to the "mere shadow" of a display to be found in the life of the common Christian or the faith of the papists or monks. More to the point, it is perhaps here in this brief preface that the heart of Luther's concern as above all a theological one becomes clear. His arguments in support of a true exhibition of the religion of Muhammad were to the end that such a presentation might reveal the truth that the Christian faith is something other than external rites, ceremonies, and show, "by far some-

¹¹WA 53:266, 277; See also 561 and there note 2.

¹²LW 46:177.

¹³Ibid., 178-79.

¹⁴Ibid., 195.

¹⁵WA 30/2:205-208.

thing other than good customs or good deeds” in which the Turks are “far superior to our Christians.” For as much as the Turks could be seen to outshine in these things, they nevertheless “deny and ardently persecute Christ, no less than our papists deny and persecute him.” Furthermore, Luther argued, the papists actually sought to conceal the truth about the Muslim religion so that it might not be revealed how similar was their own perversion of Christianity, and that they might avoid having to refute things that their actions showed them to approve.

In sum, Luther here expressed the desire to present the religion of Muhammad as clearly as possible so that for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ people might be warned against the dangers of being taken in by its false teachings. For the Christian the only necessary armor and the strongest fortification of faith were the clear demonstration of the truth and the clear identification of the contrasting central articles of the Christian teaching about Christ:

that Christ is the son of God, that he died for our sins, that he was raised for our life, that justified by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are saved, etc. These are the thunder that destroys not only Muhammad but even the gates of hell.¹⁶

Luther saw in the Turk the power of the devil and his agents, but he saw them even more dangerously in the pope and his emissaries. This view was presented again essentially unchanged in his *Appeal for Prayer against the Turk* of 1541. There, after a surprisingly modern-sounding introductory rehearsal of the evils and injustices of contemporary society ranging from the greed of the rulers and leaders to the most insignificant peasant’s petty thievery, Luther went on to read his own situation through the lens of biblical prophecy. The Turks were for Europe what the Babylonians were for Israel – a “schoolmaster” to discipline and to teach fear of God and prayer.¹⁷ The real culprits were not then the Turks, but the “papists and false Christians.” The ultimate issue was one of faith and of the true expression of the gospel at a time which Luther saw to be the end time, the time of God’s approaching day of judgment. One could not control God’s judgment; one could only repent in sincere prayer, strive that God’s word and faith not be taken captive, since Christ has not been taken captive, and endure whatever suffering was necessary in the meantime.¹⁸

Consistent with such a view, Luther continued to urge that in whatever way possible the religion and customs of “Muhammadanism” be published and spread abroad. Therefore, he expressed great personal delight when in 1542 he finally got his hands on a translation of the Qur’ān in Latin that he could read first hand. He further exercised his considerable influence when in late 1542 the Council at Basel banned and confiscated the text of a Latin translation of the Qur’ān undertaken by the printer Oporinus. In December of 1542, convinced in part by Luther’s arguments, the Council lifted the ban and released the text, provided that it be published

¹⁶WA 30/2:207.

¹⁷LW 43:224.

¹⁸Ibid., 239.

and distributed elsewhere than in Basel. This new translation, now edited by Theodor Bibliander and including prefaces by both Luther and Melanchthon,¹⁹ was published in early 1543. The main burden of Luther's preface, translated below in Part III, was to argue once again for the clear presentation of the teachings of Muhammad so that by contrast they might be more readily refuted by the clear teachings of the church about Christ, the incarnation, his death for our sins, and the resurrection, and so that Christians might thereby be armed in conflict with the enemy by a sure and certain knowledge of the central tenets of their own faith.

From this brief survey of his writings, it is clear that Luther's arguments did not originate in the context of open dialogue. It is also clear that Luther did not escape his context and that his attitudes were shaped by the common characterizations of an enemy which take place during war. All of this was further complicated by the fact that much of what Luther had was incomplete information based for the most part on secondhand reports. On the other hand it is also clear that Luther did not wish this to be so. His actions in support of the publication of the Qur'an and his written remarks argued repeatedly for a clear and honest presentation of matters of religion so that the truth might be pursued and the false refuted through consideration of what is, not of some perversion or monstrosity.

More to the point, it is above all clear that for Luther the issue of the Muhammadan religion was focused in his pastoral concern for the life of Christians; it was at heart a matter of faith, of true belief. The political and spiritual threat to be seen in the Ottoman Turk was simply a litmus test that pressed for theological clarity, for the correct understanding of what God was doing in the world. It is clear that Luther read his context theologically and through biblical lenses, particularly those of the Israelite prophets; he saw his times as the time just before the end. His vision was a strongly apocalyptic one, with the Turk as the agent or instrument of God's judgment. The only possible attitude for the Christian in the face of the justifiable wrath of God was repentance, prayer, and trust in the possible triumph of the sure and certain grace and mercy of God.

Finally, for Luther the issue was one of the person of Christ and the central teachings of the Christian faith, teachings that he saw to be denied by the Qur'an and the teachings of Muhammad. Accordingly, it was a very real necessity to study the opponent so as to be armed against a powerful untruth and so to be strengthened in confession of the gospel. For not only did Luther see the religion of Muhammad as professing a religion of works and outward ceremonies which were contrary to the gospel of God's mercy and faith, but he also saw it as denying central teachings of the second article of the creed: the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ as the Son of God. In these issues Luther points to where discussion and dialogue may and should appropriately continue: What is our understanding of what God is doing in our world? How should we behave in light

¹⁹Philip Melanchthon's involvement with the Turks still needs to be assessed. His Latin preface to the Qur'an may be found in *Corpus Reformatorum* 5:10, Nr. 2616. For John Calvin's views, see Jan Slomp, "Calvin and the Turks," *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Y. Y. and W. Z. Haddad (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1995) 126-142.

of that understanding? What do we make of the person of Jesus? Is he indeed the Christ of God?

II. LUTHER'S 1530 PREFACE TO THE TRACT ON THE RELIGION
AND CUSTOMS OF THE TURKS²⁰

Grace and Peace in Christ. I gladly accepted this little book on the religion and customs of the Turks when it was offered to me. Now I have decided to publish it, not without good reason as it seems to me. Although I have eagerly desired for some time to learn about the religion and customs of the Muhammadans, nothing has been available to me except a certain *Refutation of the Alcoran*²¹ and the *Critique of the Alcoran* by Nicholas of Cusa; I have tried in vain to read the Qur'ān itself. The authors of the *Refutation* and the *Critique* seem to have intended through pious examination to frighten sincere Christians away from Muhammadanism and hold them secure in their faith in Christ. Still, while they eagerly take pains to excerpt from the Qur'ān all the most base and absurd things that arouse hatred and can move people to ill-will, at the same time they either pass over without rebuttal or cover over the good things it contains. The result is that they have achieved too little credibility or authority, as it were cheapening their work either because of hatred of the Turks or because of their own lack of powers of refutation.

The author of this book, however, whoever he was, seems to present his case with the highest degree of credibility. Accordingly, he has achieved a high level of authority with me, so that I trust him to be narrating the truth with as much sincerity as power. Although the things he details are moderate and few, and I would wish for more and greater things, nevertheless, even such moderate and small matters are presented credibly. He relates details so as not only to recount the evils of the Turks but also to exhibit alongside them the best things, and he presents them in such a way that through comparison with those people he might reprove and censure our own. Nevertheless, he does not approve of such things, however piously they are done, but refutes them with as much vigor and strength as had been done up to that time. His writing certainly bears the clear signs of a forth-

²⁰On December 6, 1529, Veit Dietrich wrote from Wittenberg to Hektor Pömer in Nuremberg, "We have in our possession from occupied Constantinople a pamphlet written many years ago on the customs of the Turks that Luther will soon publish with the addition of his own preface." Then on January 3, 1530, Luther wrote to his friend Nikolaus Hausmann in Zwickau, "A pamphlet in Latin on the rites and religion of the Turks written almost seventy years ago is being prepared." The *libellus* referred to in these remarks appears to have been written by a certain Georg von Muelbach, in later life a Dominican priest among the curia in Rome, who as a youth had been captured when the Turks, under the lead of Murad II (1421-1451), invaded Hungary during the uncertainties of succession that accompanied the death of Emperor Sigismund in 1437. The youth was subsequently sold to some merchants and carried off in chains to Adrianopolis where he was imprisoned for some twenty years before his release in 1458. Although Luther dates the writing "almost seventy years ago" (i.e., about 1460), a more accurate date of shortly before 1481 derives from the author's reference within the work to Muhammad (i.e., Muhammad II, 1451-1481) as the "one who now rules." A translation of the preface referred to in Dietrich's letter and written by Luther to accompany his publication of the *libellus* follows. For further historical background, see the introduction to Luther's preface in *WA* 30/2:198-200, from which these brief notes are excerpted.

²¹I.e., that by Brother Richard included in the list in Part I and translated later by Luther in 1542.

right and sincere heart that writes nothing from hatred, but sets forth everything out of love of the truth. Indeed, those who only censure and condemn the base and absurd characteristics of the enemy but remain silent about matters that are honest and worthy of praise do more harm than good to their cause. What is easier than to condemn things that are manifestly base and dishonest (which in fact refute themselves)? But to refute good and honest things that are hidden from sight, that is to further the cause, that is to lift up and remove the scandal, to despoil the messengers of their counterfeit image of the light and to render them appropriately hateful because of their base plundering of the light.

From this book, accordingly, we see that the religion of the Turks or Muhammad is far more splendid in ceremonies – and, I might almost say, in customs – than ours, even including that of the religious or all the clerics. The modesty and simplicity of their food, clothing, dwellings, and everything else, as well as the fasts, prayers, and common gatherings of the people that this book reveals are nowhere seen among us – or rather it is impossible for our people to be persuaded to them. Furthermore, which of our monks, be it a Carthusian (they who wish to appear the best) or a Benedictine, is not put to shame by the miraculous and wondrous abstinence and discipline among their religious? Our religious are mere shadows when compared to them, and our people clearly profane when compared to theirs. Not even true Christians, not Christ himself, not the apostles or prophets ever exhibited so great a display. This is the reason why many persons so easily depart from faith in Christ for Muhammadanism and adhere to it so tenaciously. I sincerely believe that no papist, monk, cleric, or their equal in faith would be able to remain in their faith if they should spend three days among the Turks. Here I mean those who seriously desire the faith of the pope and who are the best among them. The rest of the mob and the greater part of them, especially the Italians, those swine from the band of Epicurus, who believe absolutely nothing, are secure from every heresy and error, strong and invincible in their Epicurean faith, armed as much against Christ as against Muhammad or against even their own pope.

For this reason, therefore, we are publishing this book and thrusting it in the face of the opponents of the gospel, so that, confused as they are in their own foolish opinions, they might actually experience and feel with their own hands that what the gospel teaches is true. For the gospel teaches that the Christian religion is by far something other and more sublime than showy ceremonies, tonsures, hoods, pale countenances, fasts, feasts, canonical hours, and that entire show of the Roman church throughout the world. Indeed, in all these things the Turks are by far superior. Nevertheless, they continue to deny and ardently persecute Christ, no less than our papists deny and persecute him. May they finally then grasp this truth, namely, that the Christian religion is by far something other than good customs or good works. For this book shows that the Turks are far superior to our Christians in these things as well.

So now be off with you, you tyrants and pontiffs, and for the sake of faith in Christ – i.e., for the sake of your ceremonies – kill, burn, suffocate, proscribe, and rage in full force, since here you see that the splendor of your ceremonies is no

splendor at all alongside the excellent splendor of the Turks and that your customs are clearly an abomination when compared to theirs. Accordingly, it is likewise as a kind of apology for our gospel that we are publishing this book. For now I understand the reason why the Turkish religion is so concealed by the papists, why only base things are told of them. It is because they sense what in fact is true, that, if it should come to the point of arguing about religion, the whole papistry with all its trappings would fall. Nor would they be able to defend their own faith and at the same time refute the faith of Muhammad, since then they would have to refute those things that they themselves most approve and for which they most strive, and defend those things that the followers of Muhammad most approve and for which they most strive.

There are, I confess, also very many base and absurd things to be seen among the Turks, and perhaps in the meantime more have arisen. I say this not only because in all things the present-day Turks are likely of the same sort as the ones this book describes before the capture of Constantinople—i.e., written some seventy years ago—but because all things are accustomed to grow worse with time. Yet these evils are concealed by such a beautiful, effective, and robust show of ceremonies, good works, and false miracles. Indeed what manner of baseness has there not been among us, too, in such monstrous deeds of lust, avarice, ambition, haughtiness, envy, discord, blasphemy, lies, vanity, impiety, that we could have surpassed Sodom and Gomorrah! Nevertheless, all these evils have been concealed by an even more weak show of ceremonies than is the case with the Turks, so that they might not be seen and we ourselves be deemed nonetheless saints. How much less will their own vices move the Turks, clothed as they are in religious ceremonies!

Finally, I am publishing this book for yet another reason, in order to anticipate and prevent the scandal of the Muhammadans. Since we now have the Turk and his religion at our very doorstep, our people must be warned lest, either moved by the splendor of the Turkish religion and the external appearance of their customs, or offended by the meager display of our own faith or the deformity of our customs, they deny their Christ and follow Muhammad. Rather let them learn that the religion of Christ is something other than ceremonies and customs and that faith in Christ has absolutely nothing to do with discerning what ceremonies, customs, or laws are better or worse, but declares that all of them squeezed together into one mass are not enough for justification nor are they a work for them to perform. Unless we learn this, there is danger that many of our people will become Turks, disposed as they are to much less splendid errors.

However effectively this author attacks the absurdities and evils of the Turks and candidly and rightly refutes their specious scandals (to which, as he confesses, he himself at one time was so moved as to fall prey), still it is clear that at that time our greatest fortification and strongest arms were not so publicly vigorous. These defenses are the articles about Christ, namely, that Christ is the son of God, that he died for our sins, that he was raised for our life, that justified by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are saved, etc. These are the thunder that destroys not

only Muhammad but even the gates of hell. For Muhammad denies that Christ is the son of God, denies that he died for our sins, denies that he arose for our life, denies that by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are justified, denies that he will come as judge of the living and the dead (though he does believe in the resurrection of the dead and the day of judgment), denies the Holy Spirit, and denies the gifts of the Spirit. By these and similar articles of faith consciences must be fortified against the ceremonies of Muhammad. With these weapons his Qur'ān must be refuted.

If there are any who deny the articles just asserted, of what benefit is it to them even if they have the religion of the angels, even if they are twice as religious as the Turks? On the other hand, what can harm those who hold on to these articles, even without numerous fasts, prayers, vigils, and abstentions, even without such great modesty in food, dress, gesture, and style of life? The Turks and the papists may be radiant in such matters. At the same time they are void of true faith and filled alike with other most disgraceful crimes, abominable before God and hateful among people.

Indulgence must be granted to this author, however, insofar as his writing did not escape the common defects of the age and was composed in the usual style of his time. Yet he is truly to be praised for the noble zeal, candor, and diligence by which, to the extent he was able, he distinguished himself faithfully. Perhaps I will say more, if ever I get my hands on that Muhammad and his Qur'ān. Indeed, I hope that our gospel, radiant with such great light, will make an assault now before the day of judgment on that abominable prophet Muhammad. May our Lord Jesus Christ do so quickly. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

III. PREFACE TO THE QUR'ĀN OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER, PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AND PASTOR OF THE CHURCH AT WITTENBERG

Many persons have authored small tracts describing the rites, beliefs, and customs of Jews of this day for the very purpose of more easily refuting their manifest lies and exposed errors and ravings. There is no doubt that, when pious minds bring the testimony of the prophets to bear on the delusions and blasphemies of those people, they are greatly confirmed in faith and in love for the truth of the gospel and are fired with a righteous hatred of the perversity of the Jewish teachings. Indeed let any sane or moderate person consider how much of the most tasteless slander, how much madness and wickedness there is in Jewish beliefs and rites, a truth to be grasped from the fact that their learned and good men (e.g., as in the case of Nicholaus of Lyra, Salomo Levi from Burgos, or Antonius Margaritha) promote the Eleusinian mysteries.

For just as in the beginning in paradise the devil maddened the unfortunate Eve with his lies and drove her from God, so it is certain that since that time it is by the devil that the ragings of all the nations have been aroused against the true teaching of God. The fact that all peoples sacrificed human victims, as is evident from the examples not only among the ancient Greeks and Romans, but also from later times, like the Emperor Severus; the fact that the Egyptians worshipped cats, the people of

Arabia dogs, the Lampsaceniens Priapus, and other peoples one monster or another; the fact that things which were defiling in Cyprus or at Thebes, became in Egypt or somewhere else sacred rites: it is certain that all these things have been wrought by the devil who has continued to drive blinded human minds, in the first place, so that he might show himself to be an enemy of God, and, in the second place, so that he might haughtily deceive the feeble nature of humankind.

It was the devil who also aroused such ravings of the Jews when after the resurrection of Christ they fomented revolution, when after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem they incited war a second time under the leadership of Bar Cochba, and when under the reign of the Emperor Julian the Apostate they began again to rebuild the temple. No less insane is the fact that since they are not able to take up arms, they sit in the midst of their sacrifices and hurl curses at the Son of God and devise deceitful and poisonous corruptions of the prophetic witness; they fashion crude rites, they lacerate their own bodies and those of their infants, and continue to have some sort of hopeful dreams of dominion over the world, contrary to the manifest testimonies of the prophets.

To be sure, the devil would wish that such deceits of his would not be uncovered, would not be brought to light, would not be censured. But just as the apostles condemned the errors of the nations, so now the church of God ought to refute the errors of all the enemies of the gospel, so that the glory of God and his Son Jesus Christ might be celebrated against the devil and his instruments. While the son of God was hanging on the cross, the whole world of nature testified with novel and awesome signs that this death mattered to God, and threatened not only the Jews, but the whole world of all times insofar as it rejected the Son of God. Even if a few were moved, God still wanted to set forth a clear testimony. Thus, even if this world at the extreme end of the ages is oppressed by a huge multitude of idolatrous Jews, Muhammadans, and papists, nevertheless, let us sound forth the voice of the gospel and bear witness that the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ, whom the apostles show us, is truly the Son of God and Savior, and let us denounce the errors of all those who wage war against the gospel.

Therefore, as I have written against the idols of the Jews and the papists, and will continue to do so to the extent that it is granted me, so also I have begun to refute the pernicious beliefs of Muhammad, and I will continue to do so at more length. But in order to do this, it is also useful to study closely the writings of Muhammad themselves. Accordingly, I have wanted to get a look at a complete text of the Qur'ān. I do not doubt that the more other pious and learned persons read these writings, the more the errors and the name of Muhammad will be refuted. For just as the folly, or rather madness, of the Jews is more easily observed once their hidden secrets have been brought out into the open, so once the book of Muhammad has been made public and thoroughly examined in all its parts, all pious persons will more easily comprehend the insanity and wiles of the devil and will be more easily able to refute them. This is the reason that has moved me to wish to publish this book.

Given the fact, however, that some persons fear that by reading such a book

weak minds might be corrupted as it were by an infection and turned from Christ, to such persons I respond in this way. May there be none so infirm in the church of God that they do not have this conviction fixed in their mind, that, as certain as they know that they are alive as long as their senses and bodily motor functions are still vital, as certain as they know that it is day, as long as they see the sun passing above the earth in the middle of the sky, so certain should they be that it is patently impossible that any religion or doctrine about the worship or invocation of God be true that utterly rejects the prophetic and apostolic writings.

There is one eternal church beginning from Adam, to whom God revealed himself with sure and wondrous testimonies in the very word which God entrusted to the prophets and apostles. Time and time again God commands that by its teaching God is to be known and acknowledged and that all other beliefs about God be rejected. To this one teaching God joins us, just as the prophet Isaiah clearly says in chapter 59: "This is my covenant, says the Lord: my Spirit is in you, and my words that I have placed in your mouth will not depart from your mouth or the mouth of your descendants for ever." And Christ says: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you; whatever you ask will be done for you." And Paul says that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Therefore, all beliefs of all nations about God that either ignore or reject the prophets and the apostles are to be insistently condemned.

Muhammad acknowledges, however, that he is devising a new belief that dissents from the prophets and apostles. Therefore, as you firmly repudiate the beliefs of the Egyptians who worshipped cats and of the Arabians who worshipped dogs, so you shall denounce the new creation of Muhammad, because he himself openly admits that he does not embrace the teaching of the prophets and apostles. If there are any who are so without understanding that they do not have this conviction fixed in their mind that the only true religion is that which was from the beginning handed on by God, with clear testimonies, through the prophets and apostles, even if these persons do not now read the writings of Muhammad, but either only hear about the Turks or see them, how will they fortify themselves against their beliefs? Rather, it is a shameful and impious ignorance if they do not daily admonish themselves in intercession concerning this belief, if they do not separate themselves from the Jews, the Turks, and other nations in prayer; if they do not meditate on the fact that this one alone is the eternal and true God, the creator and sustainer of all things, who hears us and will grant life eternal, who revealed himself in the writings of the prophets and apostles, who willingly sent God's Son to be a sacrifice for our sake. Those who meditate on these things in prayer will acknowledge that this stupidity is no light sin.

Because only a few call upon God rightly in prayer, the church, therefore, is being punished for its ignorance and neglect. But since this punishment is already in sight, may it warn us, as I have already said, to separate ourselves in prayer from the Turks, from the Jews, and from the other nations, and to invoke the eternal and true God, the creator of all things, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was

crucified for our sake and raised from the dead. But I shall speak about these things more fully at another time.

Daniel and the other captives won over the King of Babylon and many others to true knowledge of God. The Goths, the Huns, and the Franks, although victorious, nevertheless, were converted by their captives to the worship of God. So now, too, God perhaps will call some of the Turks from their darkness through their Christian captives who have been instructed. Or perhaps God wishes that those uninstructed Christians who are sorely oppressed in Illyria, Greece, and Asia, may be strengthened by those Christians who by reading this book will be able to fight more courageously on behalf of the gospel.

The following corollary assertions provide a source of great encouragement: Just as the church of God is eternal, so it is fitting that the church's teachings be eternal; yet this book witnesses that this creation of Muhammad is a new thing. The church of God by necessity embraces the prophets and apostles; Muhammad rejects their teaching. In the church of God from the very beginning this voice of the gospel has always been handed on: that the eternal Father willed that the Son of God become a sacrifice for sins; Muhammad scorns this sacrifice and propitiation. In the church the doctrine has always existed concerning the causes of human weakness, calamity, and death, and especially concerning sin passed on after the fall of the first parents; these Muhammad, as if an Epicurean, considers to be inane fabrications. Finally, the book itself gives rise to many other assertions whose enumeration would hardly edify the pious.

This must not be thought a matter of light importance, especially by those of us who teach in the church. We must fight on all fronts against the ranks of the devil. In this age of ours how many varied enemies have we already seen? Papist defenders of idolatry, the Jews, the multifarious monstrosities of the Anabaptists, Servetus, and others. Let us now prepare ourselves against Muhammad. But what can we say about matters that are still outside our knowledge? Therefore, it is of value for the learned to read the writings of the enemy in order to refute them more keenly, to cut them to pieces and to overturn them, in order that they might be able to bring some to safety, or certainly to fortify our people with more sturdy arguments. ⊕