

#840 The Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg – Martin Luther and Just War, part 3, Luther’s position on Just War

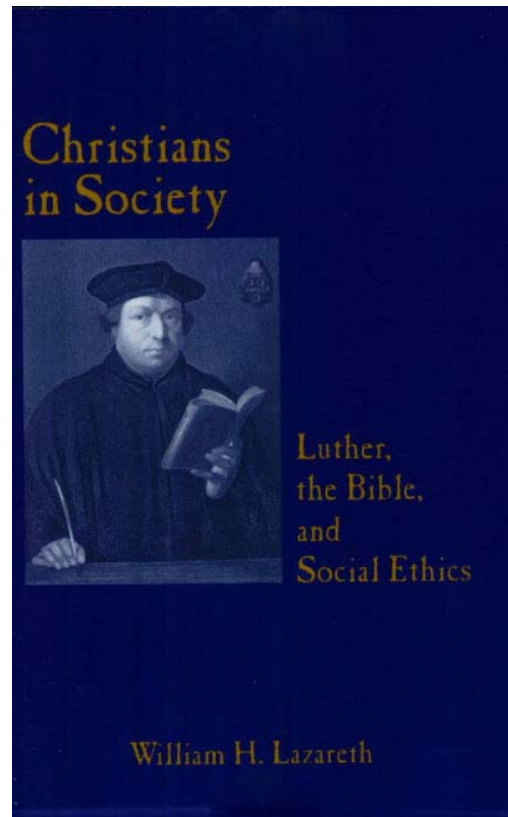
Just War

The following comes from a pro-Luther source titled *Luther’s Works, Vol. 45, The Christian in Society, Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (written in 1523 by Martin Luther), p. 124-125, © 1962, Concordia-Fortress. It appeared on chart #1281, *The Augsburg Confession*, tape #9, *Martin Luther King Series*, 10-18-94.

Martin Luther (1523):

“Here you will ask: ‘Is a (Christian) prince then not to go to war, and are his (Christian) subjects not to follow him into battle? . . .’

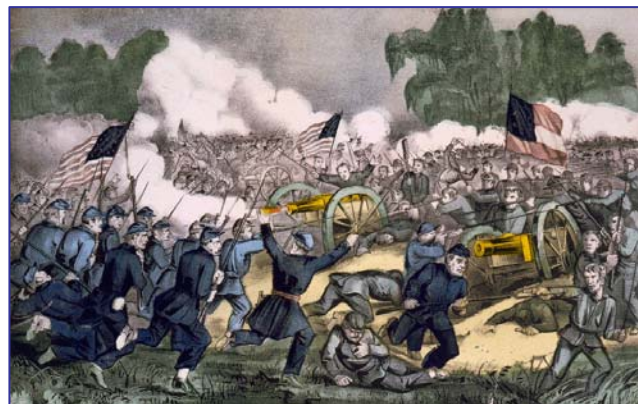
In this matter subjects are in duty bound to follow, and to devote their life and property, for in such a case one must risk his good and himself for the sake of others. In a war of this sort it is both Christian and an act of love to kill the enemy without hesitation, to plunder and burn and injure him by every method of warfare until he is conquered (except that one must beware of sin, and not violate wives and virgins). And when victory has been achieved, one should offer mercy and peace to those who surrender and humble themselves. In such a case let the proverb apply, ‘God helps the strongest.’ This is what Abraham did when he smote the kings, Genesis 14; he certainly slaughtered many, and showed little mercy until he conquered them. Such a case must be regarded as sent by God as a means to cleanse the land for once and drive out the rascals.”



Key Understanding: *Just war*. Martin Luther clearly believed in a doctrine of “just war.”

*1 Chronicles 28:3 (KJV) But God said unto me [King David], **THOU SHALT NOT BUILD AN HOUSE FOR MY NAME, BECAUSE THOU HAST BEEN A MAN OF WAR, AND HAST SHED BLOOD.***

Battle of Gettysburg painting



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