

God's Will regarding governmental Authority and Obedience to that Authority.

The following sources, as commentaries on the Fourth and the Fifth Commandments, will give additional and biblically sound instruction on God's will in regards to the matters of government and citizenship.

Due to the fact that these sources are not easily available to the layman today either by purchase or by access through a library, they have been typed and posted here.

These excerpts have been taken from William Herman Theodore Dau's "Materials for the Catechist," *Theological Quarterly*, Volume XXIII, Numbers 1 & 2 (January & April, 1919 [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919]), pages 19-49, 116-127. At intervals the page numbers of the just quoted sections will be listed subsequently in red type.

The Fourth Commandment

"The persons concerning whom duties are here laid upon us are not merely objects of our love, but we are bidden to 'honor' them. 'Honor belongs to God alone; and now He bestows honor on father and mother'. (3, 1093.¹)

¹Martin Luther, "Auslegung des Alten Testaments," *Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften herausgegeben von Dr. Johann Georg Walch*, editor Albert Frederick Hoppe, Dritte Band (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1887), seite 1093.

'Love is extended to our equals, as when two love one another, neither esteems himself superior to the other. But honor is directed toward a superior, and is accompanied by fear, lest we insult the person whom we honor. It subjects us to him as to a lord'. (3, 1101.) God 'separates and distinguishes' the persons whom He set before us in this commandment 'above all other persons upon earth, and places them next to Himself. For to honor is far higher than to love, inasmuch as it comprehends not only love, but also modesty, humility, and deference as thou to a majesty there hidden'. We are to 'regard these persons as, next to God, the very highest... as in God's stead' (*Large Catechism*, 405²)....

"The basic thought, then, of the Fourth Commandment is recognition of divinely ordained authorities. It refers to the relation of superiors and inferiors, of governors and the governed....

"With the increase of the human race social conditions became complex. The parental authority which had sufficed for the regulation of family life in the first home had to be made applicable to new relations. Large families and estates required servants; for the systematic education of a child teachers other than the child's parents became necessary; in a growing community the common rights of many parents had to be so ordered as not to interfere with the individual rights of each. Thus the parental authority and domestic government branched out. 'All authority flows and is

² Martin Luther, "Der Grosse Katechismus," *Die symbolischen Buecher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, deutsch und lateinisch*, editor Johann Tobias Mueller (Guetersloh: Bertelsmann-Verlag, 1800's), seite 405).

propagated from the authority of parents. For where a father is unable alone to educate his [rebellious and irritable] child, he employs a schoolmaster that he may instruct it; if he be too weak, he obtains the assistance of his friends and neighbors; if he departs, he confers and delegates his authority and government to others who are appointed for the purpose. Likewise he must have domestics, man-servants and maid-servants, under him for the management of the household, so that all whom we call masters are in the place of parents, and must derive their power and authority to govern from them. Hence also they are called fathers in the Scriptures, as those who in their government perform the functions of the office of a father, and should have a paternal heart toward their subordinates. As also from antiquity the Romans and other nations called the masters and mistresses of the household *patres et matres familias*, that is, housefathers and housemothers. So also they called their national rulers and chiefs *patres patriae*, that is, fathers of the country, for a great shame to us who would be Christians that we do not call them so, or, at least, do not esteem and honor them as such'. (L.C., 410f.) Scriptural precedence, then, caused Luther to insert in his explanation of the Fourth Commandment the words 'and masters'. 'We have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment, fathers in blood and fathers in office, or those to whom belongs the care of the family, and those to whom belongs the care of the nation' (L.C., 413)....

"Secular, or political, government is declared to be of divine origin in Rom. 13:1-2. Paul here speaks of *exousiae hyperechousai*, authorities which are high in standing, and of their correlates as people who must be under them (*hypotassestho*). Such a relation between magistrates and subjects is divinely ordained; it does not exist apart from God (*ei me hypo Theou*). And it makes no

difference in what form the higher power exists; such as it is (*hai de ousai*), it is set up by God. 'Thus Paul has certainly expressed the divine right of magistracy, which Christian princes especially designate by the expression "by the grace of God" (since the time of Louis the Pious). And *hai de ousai*, the extant, actually existing, allows no exception, such as that possibly of tyrants and usurpers (in opposition to *Reiche*). The Christian, according to Paul, ought to regard any magistrate whatever, provided its rule over him subsists *de facto*, as divinely ordained, since it has not come into existence without the operation of God's will; and this applies also to tyrannical or usurped power, although such a power, in the counsel of God, is perhaps destined merely to be temporal and transitional. From this point of view the Christian obeys not the human caprice and injustice, but the will of God, who - in connection with His plan of government, inaccessible to human insight - has presented even the unworthy and unrighteous ruler as the *ousa exousia*, and has made him the instrument of his measures'. (Meyer.³) When Peter (1 Ep. 2:13) calls magistrates *ktisis anthropine*, a human ordinance, he declares that the form of a government may be determined *by* men, and that the government exists *for* men. But there is nothing in this text to contradict the statement in Rom. 13:1.... (pages19-22.)

[*The duties of civil governors*, Romans 13:1-4] "Three times in close succession Paul declares: that a magistrate is a minister of God (*Theou diakonos*, v. 4, *leitourgos Theou*, v. 6). 'The thought in v. 4 that the magistracy is *Theou diakonos* is here, by way of climax, more precisely defined through *leiturgoi* (which is therefore prefixed with emphasis)

³ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament Series* (New York: Funk Wagnalls: various years 1800's).

according to the official sacredness of this relation of service, and that conformably to the Christian view of the magisterial calling. Accordingly, those who rule, in so far as they serve the divine counsel and will, and employ their strength and activity to this end, are to be regarded as persons whose administration has the character of a divinely consecrated sacrificial, a priestly nature'. (*Meyer.*) Now, these words were written with reference to magistrates, who were Gentiles, not Christians. Even they are servants ministering to God, whether they realize it or not. They should, however, be conscious of the fact that they are the ministers of God, in order to perform their office well. Also pagan magistrates, when contemplating their authority over their fellow-men, - and what an awful authority it sometimes is! - must have a conception of the solemnity and high responsibility of their office.

"Luther has embodied v. 3 and v. 4a in his *Table of Duties*, evidently, because he held that the same truth is stated in v. 4b. - Magistrates have to do with the works (*erga*), not the intentions, of their subjects. They regulate the open conduct of citizens, not their minds. - They are appointed to be a terror to evil-doers, and for that reason they have been given the awful *jus vitae et necis*, the power over life and death, which used to be, and still is, symbolized by the sword which they wore at their side, and which was in solemn procession borne before them. This sword which the magistrate wears habitually (*phorei* is stronger than *pherei*) is not a personal ornament, an idle decoration, but by having been given the right to bear it the magistrate is become an executive of justice (*ekdikos*), unto wrath, that is, for making evil-doers feel the wrath

of men whose sense of righteousness they have outraged. Accordingly, the magistrate who is loath to use his vindictive power, or is indifferent to its exercise, who connives at wrong-doing, or openly shields and defends wrong-doers, belies his sacred office, and becomes himself a worse criminal than those whom he ought to punish. On the other hand, the avenging power should not be taken away from magistrates by others. 'Our passage proves (comp. Acts 25:11) that the abolition of the right of capital punishment deprives the magistracy of a power which is not merely given to it in the Old Testament, but is also decisively confirmed in the New Testament, and which it (herein lies the sacred limitation and responsibility of this power) possesses as God's minister, on which account its application is to be upheld as a principle with reference to those cases as law where the actual satisfaction of the divine Nemesis absolutely demands it, while at the same time the right of pardon is still to be kept open for all concrete cases. The character of being unchristian, of barbarism, etc., does not adhere to the right itself, but to its abuse in legislation and practise'. (*Meyer.*) - Magistrates are appointed, furthermore, for the encouragement and advancement of every good work. They should bestow praise, offer rewards, etc., for all enterprises that look to the common welfare. A government which is cold towards the zeal, devotion, progressiveness of its public-spirited citizens, or frowns upon them, or seeks to hinder or thwart them, is not doing what God wants it to do.... See also the Theological Opinion rendered by Luther and Melancthon to the Elector of Saxony, *Whether Judicial Decisions are to be Rendered according to Moses or according to the Imperial Code* (10, 352-359). Luther's opinion, in a nutshell, is: 'Every judge is obliged to render his decision in

accordance with the laws of the country in which he lives. For while we were in subjection to Gentiles, we were amenable to their laws and jurisdiction. And this may be done with a good conscience, 1 Pet. 2:13'. (Seite 356.) (pages 30-32.)

"Insubordination would be the word to express comprehensively the sins against the Fourth Commandment. Insubordination is the refusal to recognize and adapt oneself to the relation which God has ordained between rulers and their subjects. The sins against this commandment tend to the disruption of the three fundamental estates of the world: the home, the State, and the Church, hence, to the overthrow of social order.

"The opposite of honor is contempt. Luther has, therefore, rightly described the sin against the Fourth Commandment by the two verbs 'despise' and 'provoke'; the former relates to the disposition of the heart, the latter to the expression of the contemptuous thoughts of the heart by gestures, words, and acts.

"This sin starts with the loss of *phobos*, fear, in the subjects, 1 Pet. 2:18, which 'denotes the shrinking from transgressing the master's will, based on the consciousness of subjection, cf. Eph. 6:5'. Doubtless this shrinking is in the case of the Christian based on the fear of God; but the word *phobos* does not directly mean such fear, 'but the anxious regard which should animate the inferior in his dealings with his superior' (Meyer)....

"Insubordination occurs at home, where the parental authority of either father or mother, or both, is set aside by unruly and wayward children, Prov. 30:17,

or the master's authority by servants, 1 Pet. 2:18. The master may be *skolios*, conducting himself, not in a right, but in a perverse manner, dealing unjustly with his servants. But his perverseness is a fault which God has already marked, and for which the master will have to answer; it does not, however, justify disobedience on the part of the servants. Besides, this text assumes that also 'good and gentle' masters are disobeyed. Hence the duty to obey must not be derived from the quality of the master, or the good pleasure of the servant, but from God, who says: This person has been placed over you; him you must obey; because I will that you shall....

"In Eph. 6:6 Paul warns 'servants, hired men, and laborers'... against a sin common among them which he calls *ophthalmoudoulia*, 'eye-service'. By such service they become *anthropareskoi*, 'men-pleasers'. 'It is the service rendered to the eyes of the master, but in which the aim is merely to acquire the semblance of fidelity, inasmuch as one makes himself thus noticeable when seen by the master, but is in reality not such, acting, on the contrary, otherwise when his back is turned' (Meyer)....

"The insubordination of subjects is called *antitassesthai*, 'resisting', Rom. 13:2, and is described... as a refusal to render to the government its due honor and support. Sedition, mutiny, rebellion, revolution, are terms for describing this sin.... But a question of moment to Christian consciences is whether the Bible, for instance, in Rom. 13:2, forbids revolutions. It has been observed in the preceding remarks that the apostle in this text refers to a *de facto* government of a tyrannical

character, and yet urges submission, not as an expediency, not as a policy, - the Christians were branded as disloyal to the state and as secretly plotting against the government, - but as a religious principle. 'From this point of view the Christian obeys not the human caprice and injustice, but the will of God, who - in connection with His plan of government inaccessible to human insight - has presented even the unworthy and unrighteous ruler as the *ousa exousia*, and has made him the instrument of his measures. Questions as to special cases - such as how the Christian is to conduct himself in political catastrophes, what magistracy he is to look upon in such times as the *ousa exousia*. As also, how he, if the command of the magistrate is against the command of God, is at any rate to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29), etc. - Paul here leaves unnoticed, and only gives the main injunction of obedience, which he does not make contingent on this or that form of constitution'. So Meyer. His American editor, Timothy Dwight, adds: '*Hai de ousai* refers to the then existing authorities, but suggests the same thing as relating to all times and places. Civil government is ordained of God. It should be recognized and obeyed by the subject of it as divinely instituted. The apostle is not discoursing or philosophizing on civil government, however, as if for the sole purpose of unfolding its true theory. He is in the midst of practical exhortations which bear upon the daily living of his readers. Consequently he moves in his expression within the sphere of their life, calling attention to the actual magistrates under whom they were placed, to the functions which these magistrates exercised, to the powers which they possessed, to the duties and obligation owed to them, the evil of resisting their authority. What he says, accordingly, is to be interpreted (and to receive its proper limitations also) in view of this fact. The opinion entertained by some writers that he denies here the right of revolution is

entirely without foundation. There is no reference to this subject in this passage. This right, if it exists, under any circumstances, is like that of self-defense, and the discussion of the question of its existence is altogether outside of the sphere of his present thought'. This we regard as a correct exhibition of the apostle's immediate thought in this passage. The 'right of revolution' has nowhere been codified, and cannot be profitably debated in the abstract. Each revolution, just as each war, and each act of self-defense will have to be decided on its own merit with a proper regard for all attending circumstances. The Christian must always hold to this rule, that he may suffer wrong, but never do wrong. If he has to resist his government, he must show a divine reason for his resistance, Acts 5:29. That a government whose acts defeat the very ends for which it has been instituted may be removed and replaced by another no Christian denies. The question only is to what extent he may become instrumental in such an event, and that question must be settled locally and temporally in each instance. Luther has explained the careful conduct of a Christian in regard to this matter in his *Faithful Admonition to All Christians to Avoid Tumult and Rebellion*. (10, 370 f.) - Under this head belongs also the disrespect shown the magistrates by subjects. Our political campaigns are frequently filled with slander: the persons holding office are treated as dishonest, those without office seeking to appear as the honest people, and elections are for the purpose of 'turning the rascals out'. Wanton criticism and contempt of the government, too, in the discharge of its functions is rampant. These practices are defended as the exercise of the right of free speech and unlimited debate; but that is

not infrequently only a cloak for malicious intent. A Christian soils his conscience by participating in these practices....

“Rebels are told, Rom. 13:2, that they ‘shall receive to themselves damnation’, *krima*, that is, a penal judgment here, which may be the preamble of the eternal judgment. It was this reflection which made David’s grief over the death of Absalom, 2 Sam. 15, so keen and bitter. If a person ‘despises and resists authority or rebels, let him know that he shall have no favor or blessing, and when he thinks to gain a florin thereby, he will elsewhere lose ten times as much, or become a victim to the hangman, perish by war, pestilence, and famine, or experience no good in his children, and be obliged to suffer injury, injustice, and violence at the hands of his servants, neighbors, or strangers and tyrants’ (L.C., 412).... (Pages 35-38, 40.)

“From the commandment proper Luther has transferred to his explanation the idea of honor, but has expanded it into its true meaning... The English ‘given them honor’ is not an adequate rendering either of Luther’s words or thought, which rather means ‘to regard them habitually and constantly as being objects that deserve to be honored’.

“This expansion is justified by the fact that the commandment lays down a rule for the entire life of those to whom it is addressed. It demands of inferiors not occasional expressions of reverence and homage, but an attitude of the mind, the heart, the affections, which continuously faces the superiors with awe and respect.

“The true reason why superiors should be honored is that they are ‘God’s representatives’....

“The duty of serving obedience suffers a limitation that is, indeed, self-evident, but, because of the perplexities which it creates, deserves to be noted specially. As the authority of our human superiors is secondary to that authority from which it is derived, God’s, obedience rendered to men must never be at the sacrifice of the faithful primary and absolute obedience which God requires for Himself. When the apostles declared: *Peritharchein dei Theo mallon e Anthropois*, Acts 5:29, they applied this limitation to a tyrannical and unwarranted ordinance of the representatives of the theocracy at Jerusalem. – This limitation is implied in Rom. 13: when Paul derives the powers of established governments from God, he posits the metes and bounds of the authority of the State at the declared will of God; for it is inconceivable that God would grant to any one the authority to supersede Himself.... This text [Matthew 22:21], which teaches so plainly and so forcefully the separation of Church and State, and declares the mind of our Lord and Savior on a matter that is ever dear to the heart of every Lutheran and American, may be properly inserted at this place. – The limitation is again implied in Col. 3:20, where neither Luther’s nor the English translation brings out the true force of *en Kyrie* [in the Lord], which is to be understood in the same manner as in v. 18, as denoting Christian character, in which, and as proceeding from which, the disciples whom Paul addresses are to perform whatever they do. Thus the sweeping *kata panta* [in all things] in this text is seen not

to imply absolute obedience. They could never expect to please Christ by doing the opposite of what Christ had taught them, and no appeal to the obedience which they owed Caesar would avail them at the tribunal of Jesus, who placed God above Caesar. That Christian martyrdom which makes the supreme sacrifice arises – and in fact can only arise – on the occasion when the powers that be clash with the Power that was, and is, and ever shall be. The *dei* [God] in Acts 5:29 makes such a martyrdom a sad, but still a glorious act of obedience. When this necessity arises in a given instance, must be established from the attending circumstances; there is also a false martyrdom, which arises from ignorance or conceit. Beyond explaining the general principle expressed in Acts 5:29, the catechist should not attempt to settle cases in casuistry beforehand....

“The duties of subjects to their government are comprehensively stated in Matt. 22:21....’By the *ta kaisaros* [things of Caesar] we are not to understand merely the civil tax, but everything to which Caesar was entitled in virtue of his legitimate rule’. The context, moreover, shows that our Lord meant to teach His cunning inquirers that no worshiper of God can compromise his religious faith if he discharges his political obligations. He would sin by surrendering to Caesar the affairs of his heart and conscience, over which God rules supremely; but he would likewise sin by not yielding to Caesar his entire physical life and earthly estate which he holds under the protection of Caesar. – The statement of Christ is infolded in detail by means of Rom. 13:6, 7, where the apostle summarizes practical

duties of the citizen, and tells the Romans that, in general, they must render to all magisterial persons their due, and, in particular, to tax officers, customs officers, judicial and other functionaries of the State the peculiar duty and deference which their office requires. – In 1 Tim. 2:2, the apostle enjoins upon Christians prayer for the *basileis*, that is, the highest authorities in the State, and their deputies, all who hold the office of magistrate anywhere (the same distinction occurs in 1 Pet. 2:14). ‘The prayer is... not for the conversion of the heathen rulers, but for the divine blessing necessary to them in the discharge of their office’. (*Meyer.*) The old Christian liturgies show that this injunction of the apostle was literally carried out. – All this service is to be rendered *dia ten syneidesin*, on account of the persons’ conscience, Rom. 13:5; ‘for the Lord’s sake’, 1 Pet. 2:13. With the Christian citizen loyalty to the existing government, even to a pagan government, is a religious sentiment, a principle of faith, a divine duty....

“In all the catalog of known expressions of the divine will the Fourth Commandment enjoys the distinction of being the first with a promise....

“The promise contains two distinct elements: prosperity and longevity, both temporal blessings, and hence subject to the dispensations of a conferring or withholding providence of God as may best suit the case of each individual. In honoring the obedient enactors of this law God honors this law and excites to its more general and thorough fulfillment, because its application ramifies to every phase of our earthly life, and makes that secure and enjoyable. In 1 Tim. 2:2, ‘the quiet and

peaceable life in all godliness and honesty' is virtually a restatement of the promise attached to the Fourth Commandment.

"This promise is hinted at in Col. 3:20: 'for this is well pleasing unto the Lord'; 1 Tim. 5:4: 'that is good and acceptable before God'; Heb.13:17 (*per contra*): 'that is unprofitable for you'; 1 Tim. 2:3: 'this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior'; 1 Pet. 2:14: 'for the praise of them that do well'; Rom. 13:3: 'thou shalt have praise of the same'; Eph. 6:8: 'knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord'; 1 Pet. 5:5: 'giveth grace to the humble'; v. 6: 'that He may exalt you in due time'. Thus the promise with appropriate variations recurs in many passages addressed to men in all ranks and stations in this life....

"Here, then, thou hast the fruit and the reward, *viz.*, that whoever observes this commandment shall have good days, happiness, and prosperity; and on the other hand also, the punishment that whosoever is disobedient shall the sooner perish, and never enjoy life. For to have long life in the sense of the Scriptures is not only to become old, but to have everything which belongs to long life, as, namely, health, wife and child, support, peace, good government, etc., without which this life can neither be enjoyed in cheerfulness nor long endure'. (L.C., 409.) (pages 41-43, 45, 48-49.)

The Fifth Commandment

"Life has been declared the highest earthly blessing of man. As the statement of an absolute truth this assertion will hardly pass. Scripture does not make such a statement. It is a mere human sentiment, and it is not shared by all men. Conditions have arisen in the lives of men when they wished for death as a greater fortune than the poor chance which they had for living. But life is a very great blessing, and, as a matter of fact, 'life every man holds dear'. That God wants us to have a high regard of life is shown by this commandment....

"In Gen. 9:3,4 God gives man permission to slay any beast for food, provided only that in doing so he avoid savagery: not part is to be taken for food from an animal still alive. In vv. 5, 6, however, the slaying of a human being is strictly forbidden, for this reason: man was made in the image of God. Human life, then, is peculiarly sacred in the eyes of God because He chose to express some idea of Himself when He created man. The murderer wipes out a splendid memorial of God in the world, which exists somehow even in fallen man, when he destroys a human life. God has not renounced a certain kinship with man even when man renounced God.

"But does not God Himself destroy human life? Yes, He decreed death to the very first transgressors of His will, and Gen. 9:6 was spoken to *mortal* men, who in their first ancestor already had forfeited their life. Moreover, in this very text in which God forbids killing, He commands the taking of human life. He does this in order to express in the most emphatic manner His abhorrence of murder. In Rom. 13:2 He speaks of His

'wrath' against the murderously inclined. But it is to Himself alone that He reserves the right to take away a man's life. He says: 'I kill', just as He asserts for Himself alone the opposite right, when He declares: 'I make alive'. Deut. 32:39. The beginning and end of human life are subject to His disposing or permissive providence.

"This sovereign right over a human life may be delegated to other men who take God's place (Fourth Commandment; Gen. 9:6; Matt. 26:52; Rom. 13:4), but it is God who acts through them. He alone has the right to dispose of that life in which He revealed traits of Himself.

"Lynch law is not law, but lawlessness. It infringes on the supreme authority of God and on the delegated authority of God's representatives on earth. Moral indignation does not justify it. Peter had the best reason for moral indignation, but what does the Lord tell him? Matt. 26:52. 'This is a judicial sentence, but also a threatening warning. In the former light it rests upon an absolutely universal principle. The sword is visited by the sword in war; the sword of retribution opposes the arbitrary sword of rebellious sedition; and the sword taken up unspiritually in a spiritual cause is avenged by the certain, though perhaps long-delayed, sword of historical vengeance. Peter was in all these three aspects in a bad position and the representative of wrong. The warrior opposed himself to the superior force of the legions of Rome, the rebel to the order of the magistrate, and the abuse of the sword in the service of religion provoked, and seemed to justify, the same abuse on the part of the world. Peter had really forfeited his life to the sword; but the Lord rectified his wounded position by the correcting word which He spoke, by the miraculous healing of the ear, and by the voluntary surrender of Himself to the authorities. But Peter

had not only with willful folly entered on the domain of this world, he had also brought his Master's cause into suspicion. Indeed, he sought to bring his fellow-disciple, and his Lord Himself, into this wrong position, and to make his own Christ a Mohammed. Therefore the Lord so solemnly denounced his act, pronounced an ideal sentence of death upon his head, which, however, was graciously repealed. The Lord's word from that hour became a maxim of Christianity (comp. Rev. 13:10); and it was probably spoken to Peter with a typical significance' (Lange-Schaff⁴)....

"The sacred regard which God wants men to have for human life justifies not only executions of murderers, but also acts of self-defense and defensive wars; for those who attack us come with the purpose of taking our lives, and must be dealt with as murderers....

"Gen. 9:6 imposes the death penalty on the homicide; Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17 reinforce this law. The next of kin to the murdered, the *goel hadam* ('demander of the blood') carried out the judgment. Num. 35:19, 21; Deut. 19:12. - To Matt. 26:52 Luther adds this gloss: 'Those "take the sword" that use it without authority'. In Rom. 13:2 the sword of the magistrate is the official token of the *jus vitae et necis*, and when using it officially, the magistrate is a *diakonos Theou* [servant of God]. The 'wrath' which he 'executes' is not his own, but God's wrath.

"'Yes, indeed', said Luther to a guest who had asked him whether he would defend himself when attacked by

⁴ Johann Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, editor Philip Schaff (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1900's).

robbers, 'in that case I would be judge and ruler, and would not hesitate to wield the sword, because there would be no one near to protect me'. (Erl. 62, 206⁵.)

"Every righteous war is a war of self-defense; wars for conquest are wicked. As wars are planned and declared often without the full knowledge of its causes and objects on the part of the subjects, it is usually difficult for the subjects to determine whether the war is just. It is a question whether a wholly just war has ever been waged, just as it may be questioned whether the so-called 'righteous' anger, for instance, of a father or a teacher, is ever altogether righteous. Even our good works remain hopelessly imperfect while we live in the flesh, and must be covered up with the perfect righteousness of Christ and deposited in the Fifth Petition [of the *Lord's Prayer*]. It may likewise be questioned whether there ever has been a war of the righteousness of which every one participating in it had full knowledge. It is the duty of Christians to inform themselves on this point as far as they can, in order that they may not go into the war as murderers in God's sight. They cannot sacrifice their conscience to any human authority. But they must not mistake sentiments for convictions; and whatever they do not fully grasp in any strange dispensation of Providence they should commit to God in prayer, and be ready to do their duty in war when that duty is painful to them. On the expedition of Abraham against Chedorlaomer, Gen. 14,

⁵ "Vermischte deutsche Schriften," *Dr. Martin Luther's Saemmtliche Werke*, Herausgeber Johann Konrad Irmischer, Band 62 (Erlangen & Frankfurt am Main: Heyder & Zimmer, 1830-1883), Seite 206.

Lange-Schaff has these interesting glosses: 'The first well-defined appearance of war in its different aspects. A war of the world against the world - the kings - the alliances - the conquerors - the rulers and their revolted vassals - the prominent leader (Chedorlaomer) - the attack - the victory and defeat - the plunder, and service of the captives - of the hard destiny of those who dwelt quietly in the land (Lot) - of the wide-spread terror, and the rebuke of that terror, before the true heroism with which the true hero of faith opposes a defensive and necessary war, to the attacks of the confident and haughty prince. The children of God find themselves unexpectedly involved in the wars of the world, as the history of Abram, Lot, and Melchizedek proves. The destructive nature of war, so far as it is the fruit of human passions, and the providential overruling of it unto salvation. - The fearful overthrow of the Sodomite pentapolis in the vale of Siddim and the wonderful rescue by Abram, the man of faith, wrought weakened and enervated by their luxury, nor even any gratitude towards Lot, for whose sake they were rescued. (Cap. 19:9.) Hence the lost battle and the terrors of war in the valley of Siddim became a portent and sign of their later overthrow. - It did not enter the thought of Abram that the princes against whom he went out to war were for the most part descendents of Shem, and indeed the people of his former home, and that those whom he rescued, and with whom he connects himself, are descendants of Ham. The motive of the war was to save Lot, and the alliance for the right, against the alliance for wrong, was decisive for him. The love to his brother, the Hebrew, has special power. Brotherly love. Every Hebrew, in the best and highest sense, must help others as his brethren. But in "the Hebrew" here the important thing is that he "comes from across the river," not as Delitzsch holds, that he is descended from Heber'. (Kurtz has pointed out another motive impelling Abram to this war: 'His march and victory have another and a higher reference in the object

of the history. Even here it is not to glorify Abram, but rather the wonderful providence of God over His chosen, through which all here enters in immediate connection with the divine plan. Abram is the designated possessor of the land; it is his concern, therefore, to guard the land from all assaults, and to avenge its injuries; it is the part of God, who has designated him to this, and to give him the victory'.⁶ So Jacobus: 'His title to the land involves him in the war. He must defend that which has been given to him. He is no sooner confirmed in his title than the land is invaded by a confederacy of hostile kings. Thus the kingdom of God is no sooner set up anywhere than there is a rallying of the world-kingdoms against it'. 'Abram has not only, in his faith, a heroism and self-sacrifice which overcomes the world, he has also the heroic strength and spirit. His servants are men trained to arms. He knew that, in an evil world, one needs defense and weapons, and must be armed. In his war with the world he does not despise an honorable alliance with those who, in a religious point of view, may have different ways of thinking from himself. Indeed, he acts throughout in the true hero-spirit. The rapid, instantaneous onset, the well-ordered and irresistible charge, the outmarching and flanking of the enemy, the falling upon him by night, the fierce pursuit to the very utmost, to the completed result, these are the original, fundamental laws of all intelligent warfare. *And it does not admit of question that Cromwell learned these fundamental principles of warfare from Abram and other Old Testament heroes, and it is probable that Napoleon, in these, as in many other points, was an imitator of Cromwell, as it is certain that Gneisenau and Bluecher have learned from the method of Napoleon. In the spirit of prayer Cromwell, the invincible, was greatly in advance of Napoleon; the heroes of the times when freedom triumphs place*

⁶ Johann Heinrich Kurtz, *Geschichte des Alten Bundes*, Band 1 (Berlin: Justus Albert Wohlgemuth, 1857-1864).

victoriously the joyful longing for deliverance of the people over against the demoniac lust of conquest of the murderers of the people'. (*Ad locum.*) - In Luther's writings the following are of incisive importance to the student of the relation of a Christian to war: *Whether Soldiers Are in a Blessed Estate* (1526), 10, 488 ff.; *Theological Opinions on Self-defense* by Luther, Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Jonas, Spalatin, and other theologians, also of jurists of Wittenberg, 10, 532-577.... (pages 116-120.)

"Accordingly, the magistrates to whom God has delegated the awful authority to take men's lives, the governments who have been given the right to declare war, bear a tremendous responsibility. Theirs is the most hideous form of murder because they can dress it up in the garments of righteousness and virtue. The Hebrew midwives Shiprah and Puah would not soil their consciences with authorized murder, Ex. 1:15. There is no doubt that executions have taken place on this wicked earth which put the poor victim in heaven and his judges and executioners in hell.

"In his explanation of the Fifth Commandment Luther does not refer to the gross form of killing at all. Killing in this form is relatively rare. But over and against ancient and modern Pharisees our Lord has shown that the purpose of the Fifth Commandment is really defeated by a literal interpretation of its terms. The God who uttered these words, 'Thou shalt not kill', saw real murder when human eyes would not perceive them, and by the comprehensive terms which He employed denounced murder in any form and degree. There are subtle ways of killing a person....

“We must not kill either with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, or counsel’ (L.C., 416.)....

“Vengefulness, an accompanying feature of anger and hatred, Rom. 12:19. Vengeance is not wrong in itself. *Elkdikesis* literally means ‘righting’, viz., a wrong. Vengeance is the final and drastic assertion of a violated right. But the person who is angry and hates is not a fit judge of his own right and the other’s wrong. His desire for revenge becomes a cloak for his intent to hurt and harm his neighbor. Therefore Scripture couples ‘revenge’ with ‘wrath’ in Rom. 12:19 and forbids both. The plain assumption in this text is, that the party seeking revenge has actually suffered wrong. Even in that case man’s wrath must yield to God’s wrath. Accordingly, when the constituted authorities slay and punish, they are preservers of life; they remove from the community elements that destroy, embitter, and shorten lives. Whoever has suffered injury can afford to wait for God’s hour for righting his wrong. God has said (Deut. 32:35): ‘I will repay’. That is a sufficient guarantee that there will be a proper retribution in due time. And when God adds: ‘Vengeance is Mine’, He warns all not to trespass on forbidden ground by taking vengeance into their own hands. Human vengeance is ever imperfect and often a sorry travesty on justice. ‘This commandment insists upon it that no one offend his neighbor on account of any injury, even though he have fully deserved it.... Since this inheres in every one by nature, and is a matter of ordinary experience, that no one is willing to suffer at the hands of another, God wishes to remove the root and

source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor, and to accustom us ever to keep in view this commandment, always as in a mirror to contemplate ourselves in it, to regard the will of God, and with hearty confidence and invocation of His name to commend to Him the wrong which we suffer; and thus let our enemies rage and be angry, doing what they can. Thus we may learn to calm our wrath, and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, i.e., our enemies’. (L.C., 416f.)

“Irreconcilableness, Matt. 5:25, usually accompanies hatred and vengefulness, and is murderous, not only in design, because by severing all connection, having nothing to do with a person, the irreconcilable person virtually considers the hated person dead to himself and leaves him to perish, but also in immediate effect, because it inflicts intense and, in not a few instances, deadly grief.

“Spiteful speech, the expression of the malicious thoughts of the heart, is the next evolution of subtle murder. ‘Race’ in Matt. 5:22 has been rendered ‘empty head’ and ‘blackguard’.... (Pages 116-124.)

“God’s anger is ablaze against those who break this commandment. Not only has He empowered the magistrates, Gen. 9:6; Matt. 26:52; Rom. 13:4 (and the Jewish Church with its local courts and great councils, Matt. 5:21, 22), to punish murderers, but He proposes to punish the offenders Himself. Think of what God’s wrath and vengeance means, Rom. 12:19. How will He ‘repay’? He threatens the murderers with ‘hell-fire’, Matt. 5:22, with the eternal ‘prison’, Matt. 5:25 (cg. V. 26),

and shuts them out from 'eternal life', 1 John 3:15. The Christian hope of a future life in heaven cannot 'abide' in a murderer's heart....

“God well knows that the world is evil, and that this life has much unhappiness; therefore He has placed this and the other commandments between the good and the wicked. As now there are many temptations against all the commandments, so the temptation in respect to this is that we must live among many people who do us wrong, that we have cause to be hostile to them’ (L.C., 416)....

“God reasons thus: I have wild, unreasoning, mad, raving animals in this world, wolves, bears, lions, etc. I must lock these up, put them in iron cages, bolt the doors, and wall them in with strong walls, lest they go at each other's throats and do great damage. For if God was not moved by this concern, why should He have to give us the commandments? Hence, God knows our heart and our nature exceedingly well. He knows that murder is inborn in our flesh; accordingly, He issues also this commandment, in order that we may know ourselves. He is concerned lest we murder each other like mad, raving dogs, wolves, and bears. He regards us as desperate knaves, who would kill and murder on another. The story which Moses tells after he has told about Adam is concerning murder and killing, one brother slaying the other. God to now, my friend, and brag about our going to be holy! We boast our reason, wisdom, and free will, but what does God think of us? He considers us all murderers and manslayers, not one

excepted. God acts like a burgomaster or ruler who hears that some have threatened that they are going to do damage, break into houses at night, etc., and therefore orders his guards to keep watch and restrain them. Thus God expects no good from us, but regards us all as murderers; accordingly, He commands us not to kill’ (3, 1112.)....

“God and the government are included in this commandment, nor the power which they have to kill. For God has delegated His authority to governments, to punish evil-doers, instead of parents, who aforesaid (as we read in Moses) were required to bring their children to judgment and sentence them to death. Therefore this prohibition pertains to individuals and not to governments’. (L.C., 415f.)” (pages 126-127.)