

Article Type: Research



## TEMPORALITY OF LUTHER'S THOUGHTS ON THE RIGHT TO RESISTANCE



<sup>1</sup>Mehmet Said KAYA

### Abstract

The thoughts of Martin Luther on the right to resistance are usually examined with his work *On Temporal Authority*, published in 1523, in which Luther defended the sacredness of the secular authorities and rejected the natural law theories that limit the power of civil governments. Luther, in his early writings, identified two duties for Christians: trust God without any doubts to reach justification and obey the secular power even if it is evil. According to him, secular power is given to authorities by God's will, and the use of force can only be allowable if the resister's authority is equal or superior then the opponent's position. However, by the 1530s, Luther changed his mind about the resistance, he invited German princes and all Christians to disobey the emperor and corroborated his arguments with imperial laws in 1531, *Warning to His Dear German People*. At the end of the decade, he radicalized the ideas on the resistance and even adduced from natural law. Behind this change, German politics and the emperor's threats were quite effective on Luther's thoughts. He tried to protect his reformed church and evangelical supporters in this process. After the 1530s, when the emperor planned to attack the Protestants, Luther reconstitutes his ideas that were the exact opposite of his early writings. Therefore, the temporality of Luther's thoughts that were shaped with reactions of political facts can be examined with his arguments on the right to resistance.

**Keywords:** Luther, Right to Resistance, Temporality, Reformation Politics

### Luther'in Direnme Hakkı Üzerine Düşüncelerinin Zamansallığı

#### Özet

Martin Luther'in direnme hakkı üzerine düşünceleri genellikle 1523 yılında yayımlanan *Seküler Otorite Üzerine* isimli çalışması ile incelenir. Bu çalışmada seküler otoritelerin kutsallığını savunur ve sivil yönetimlerin iktidarını kısıtlayan doğa yasası teorilerini reddeder. Luther erken dönem yazılarında Hıristiyanlar için iki görev tanımlar: kurtuluşa ulaşmak için Tanrı'ya şüphe duymadan güvenmek ve kötü olsalar dahi seküler otoriteye itaat etmek. Ona göre yönetimlere güç Tanrı tarafından bahşedilir ve direnme hakkı yalnızca şiddet yoluyla direnecek otoritenin karşısındaki makama denk ya da üstün olmasıyla meşru olabilir. Ancak, 1530'larda Luther, direnme üzerine düşüncelerini radikal bir şekilde değiştirmiştir. 1531 yılında yayımladığı *Sevgili Alman Halkına Uyarı* çalışmasında tüm Alman prenslerini ve Hıristiyanları İmparator'a itaatsizlik yapmaya davet eder ve argümanlarını imparatorluk hukukundan ve doğa yasalarından örneklerle destekler. Bu değişimin arkasında, Alman siyasetinin ve İmparatorun tehditlerinin Luther'in düşünceleri üzerinde açık etkisi vardır. Luther bu süreçte Reform Kilisesini ve Evanjelik destekçilerini korumaya çalışır. 1530 sonlarında İmparator Protestanlara karşı saldırı planları yaparken Luther, fikirlerini erken dönem çalışmalarına zıt olarak tekrar inşa eder. Bu nedenle, Luther'in politik gelişmelere verdiği reaksiyonlarla şekillenen düşüncelerindeki zamansallık direnme hakkı düşünceleri üzerinden incelenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Luther, Direnme Hakkı, Zamansallık, Reform Siyaseti

<sup>1</sup> Research Assistant, Tarsus University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, msaidkaya@tarsus.edu.tr, ORCID-iD: 0000-0002-5830-9727

## INTRODUCTION

Historical and political studies on the pre-modern period in Turkey usually are overlooked the importance and impacts of the reformers, particularly the late works of Luther. Besides his legacy for Jean Calvin and Protestantism (particularly Huguenots), studies that have been examined the era includes limited knowledge about Luther, mostly his early works and movements such as *theses* and Diet of Worms. Luther is praised as the father of the Reform which mentions a crucial point, on the other side, he was a key to understand the politics of Germany in the early sixteenth century, and the Protestant ideas that shaped the modern political philosophy with Calvin, similarly about the concept of the right to resistance which generally associated with Protestant thinkers and natural law studies. However, as with other arguments, Luther made a strong contribution to this subject.

The deformation of the traditional structure with the corruption of the church, economic revolution, and centralization of the secular authorities were accepted as the causes of the reformation. About the corruption, there were many criticisms of the church and clergy because of their greed and interventions to the secular world and power in late medieval and humanist studies. But, further that, apart from the several political and economic causes in other European kingdoms, the political system that provided power balance in the empire was also influential in the development of a “reform of the church” idea in Germany. Therefore, it can be said that, after Luther's arguments on the corruption of the clergy and the demand for a reformation, the process interconnected with political facts and events in the empire.

Luther's definition of a passive and obedient Christian was related to his criticisms of Catholic understanding to abolish the mediate institutions and offices in the relation between an individual and God. The revolutionary idea that the right to talk with God for every Christian had been already asserted by former thinkers to some extent, but with the appropriate political and social conditions of the period, Luther improved and actualized these ideas. From this point of view, the reformation movement of Luther's definitions also had strong political teaching against the empire and Rome, and this was the intellectual weapon of princes against the emperor to protect their independence. Therefore, to understand the change of Luther's ideas from the 1520s to 1530s, historical events that affected the political conditions and balance of power should be considered. In this respect, the temporality of Luther's ideas on the right to resistance, allowing self-defense of a Christian against the violence of the secular authority, is examined in his early and late works with political developments in the research. To enlighten these approaches of Luther, his conception of “justification by faith” is investigated with the terms of necessity, grace, and free will. Thus, the impacts of political practices on Luther's thoughts are revealed.

### 1. LUTHER ON THE IDENTITY OF CHRISTIANS

After *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517, Luther was not open to dispute on the subject of faith, he started a reformation movement that rejected and criticized the clerical organization, indulgences, and practices

of the church. Till Luther, the church was the authority for salvation, the forgiveness of sins was in the hand of the clergy with indulgences. His arguments about salvation refused indulgences and even any practices, but the only way was *sola scriptura*: only the Bible can lead a Christian throughout the faith and only Christ and his grace can save Christians (Pelz, 2016: 19-20). Beyond his theological arguments, Luther reidentified the Christians with evangelical and medieval approaches. In *Assertio omnium articulorum*<sup>2</sup>, published in 1920, Luther rejected the human's will on good or evil and defended that everything in this world happens with absolute necessity. This text was a kind of declare of total rejection of free will. After debates with Erasmus on the subject, Luther went much further about the necessity and linked his deterministic ideas with free relation with God (Alfsvag, 2015: 52-53).

To reach this point, Luther used different approaches of medieval and humanist thinkers. According to Melanchthon, Luther was an early and late medieval theologian (Ozment, 1980: 233). He emphasized the evil of human nature by interpreting the discussions and crises of that period in his text *On the Bondage of the Will* in 1525. Influenced by Eckhart's mysticism, Luther rejected the optimistic attitude of scholastic teaching towards man and reinvigorated Augustine's sinful-passive human nature by glorified grace. He argued that it was impossible to understand God and his laws by reason, approaching Ockham's thoughts<sup>3</sup>. He did not refuse to understand the laws of nature but argued that salvation through reason and even virtues (in other words, the will) is a meaningless and arrogant thought. Free will and individual choices were just paths to sin. God had predetermined who would be saved. The only way for the helpless person to be rewarded to the Kingdom of Heaven was sheer faith (*sola fide*), with God's *gratia* –the saving grace (Skinner, 1978: 4-8, 22-24). In addition to Eckhart's mysticism, Ockham gave the justification of men to God's will only, and against Thomist argument, he rejected the benefits of good works of humanity about salvation. According to Ockham, people have free will in the secular world (even it is limited), however, a morality that is freely willed is not valid unless God accepts that (Trinkaus, 1949: 54-55). These arguments were the prior manifest of Luther's salvation. Similarly, Lorenzo Valla who was one of the "authority" of Luther, emphasized the divine predestination that "*the individual's inborn character will determine voluntary behavior*" in *Dialogue on Free will* around 1440 (Trinkaus, 1949: 59).

Against the humanist view that people can be good with education on virtues<sup>4</sup>, both Valla and Luther defended the divine necessity. For Luther, God's knowledge contains the future, and the future does not change. Even people think their actions mean something, which is not true, everything happens

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<sup>2</sup> *Assertio* had references to Scripture, doctrinal tradition of Wycliffe, and Latin poetry such as Marcus Manilius (Alfsvag, 2015: 53)

<sup>3</sup> William of Ockham classified all human knowledge into two basic groups. First, intuitive cognition is empirical impressions that only exist in the physical world, can be experienced, and obtained by eyewitnesses. The second one is abstractive cognition, which is beyond human understanding (Ozment, 1980: 57-60). Ockham completely cut off the links between practical and theoretical knowledge. The dogmatic structure created by this stream of thought ended in the total rejection of the reason in the theological approach (Le Goff, 2019: 173-175).

<sup>4</sup> Humanities (*studia humanitatis*) was the main subject of the humanists, and with that, the *reductio artis ad theologiam* (the reducing of everything to the theological argument) idea ended. The term used *humanitas* represented the constant progress of people morally (Goody, 2006: 238).

immutably because of the will of God (Alfsvag, 2015: 62). Lastly, most of the essential terminology that Luther used to explain his theological arguments and especially his justification was formed by Erasmus. He developed medieval terms such as faith, trust, and grace to practicable in reformation thought, therefore, created a basis for evangelical approach<sup>5</sup> (Green, 1974: 188). The criticisms of Erasmus were more than the grammatical contributions. His translations of the testaments were used by Luther throughout his life for the Bible studies, particularly the parts on St. Paul. Luther's translation were more comprehensive and more subjective to his evangelical doctrine<sup>6</sup> that can be summarized as justification by faith, which was based on Erasmusian translations, but not blindly (Smith, 1911: 238-240). Along with his criticisms of Erasmus, Lutheran translation constituted the critical parts of his thoughts because they were his arguments to support his ideas on anticlericalism. Consequently, Luther had bases to improve his ideas on "justification by faith" without mediators and free will by both medieval and Renaissance theology.

Luther refuted the Scholastic doctrine that reconciled divine election-free will and attributed his view of the necessity to grace. Luther's necessity is not ontological determinism, but metaphysics of relations to almighty Creator. It refers to the determinedness of the moral character. About the goodness of an act, instead of the event, Luther concentrated on the meaning and significance. In the relation to God, everything is necessary. If it follows God's will, it is necessarily good; and in contrast, anything against His will is evil. In this regard, for Luther, humanity can do whatever they can, but if their acts are not determined by divine love, they are evil. Hence, human acts are not uninteresting, but the meaning of what they do is important to identify the good or evil for the justification. About knowing who will be justified, Christians have to trust God for their salvation, doubt comes from the devil. However, trust is not knowledge, therefore it should be considered with faith. Good works are done because of their goodness for the grace of God. After that, with trust in God, a believer will be saved and loved, therefore, becomes free to serve others without any expectations of rewards (Alfsvag, 2015: 55-66; Kuenning, 1987: 306).

Luther's ethics provides liberation from sin through justification and forgiveness, which refers to a new type of relationship between individual and God. This relationship is based on human's good works to receive God's justification and mercy. But, that is not mean a human can be saved with his action, for Luther, this approach is foolish. According to him, the only way for salvation is "justification by faith" which directly depends on God's will and grace, as mentioned. On the other hand, it can be asked that how Luther create an ethic that irrelevant to human actions and still provide the goodness of the Christians? Luther identified Christian identity and freedom with a vice versa method, "*Good works*

<sup>5</sup> For further information about Erasmusian grammar of theology and his effects on the reformers such as Luther and Melanchthon, see L. C. Green (1974). *The Influence of Erasmus upon Melanchthon, Luther and the Formula of Concord in the Doctrine of Justification*. *Church History*, 43(2), 183-200.

<sup>6</sup> Against the accusations to his Pauline approaches, Luther defended his translation himself in his *Letter on Translation* as: "*It is my New Testament and my version and I will not let papists judge it. If the word 'alone' is not found in the Latin and Greek, yet the passage has that meaning and must be so rendered to make it clear and strong in German.*" (Smith relayed from Luther, 1911: 241)

*do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works*". This identification of Luther enlightens the necessity of a Christian in morality: a true believer should be a good man and servant to get the justification, the grace of God (Seong, 2014: 328-331). Luther described an ethos, an identity for Christians with the "justification by faith" with the love of God to neighbors. So, he did not miss the acts of people or traditional ethics but create a new identity that demonstrates goodness inner of humanity through love which is not normative and not for reward. However, the relation of faith and love was directly between a faithful Christian and God, it makes religious institutions and other persons unnecessary. This is how Luther did identify the Christians as slaves of God's will and pioneered the free thought<sup>7</sup> of the modern period. He abolished the effectiveness of one of the most powerful institutions of the feudal era over believers –ceremonies, prays, indulgence, etc., the church. During the medieval period, the sense of the Church was the key to the salvation of the Christians and parishes were the example of *societas perfecta* (Lindberg, 2010: 49-50) show the impacts of Luther's arguments. He replaced the intangible and direct relationship between God and the individual with the strict and hierarchical spiritual relations to salvation provided by the clergy. In his later works, Luther reidentified the "self" with an active, valuable and responsible individual that had the right to choose and to act (Gaebler, 2002: 127). Thereby, after 1535, Luther's determination of Christian love through neighbors included both faithful himself/herself and neighbor.

## **2. SECULAR AUTHORITY AND THE RIGHT TO RESISTANCE DURING THE 1520S**

According to Luther's definition of the Christian identity, a faithful man could not withstand any pressures of the secular world. His sinful body has to embrace all iniquities from others by knowing the source is God. Christian identity includes patience and love to neighbors because he trusts in God. In parallel with that, Luther defended that Christians should have the same attitudes to secular authorities in his early writings. This approach, which is the main topic of the research, is related to Christian ethics and identity. In this case, connections of the Reformation and politics should be considered to the temporality of the thinkers' ideas. If the political practices of Protestantism did not exist, it could be called a dead movement in history. For indeed, it was only represented by a minority for a time (Seidler, 1993: 553).

Luther is generally compared with Augustine because of his thoughts on secular authority. In his well-known work *On Temporal Authority*, published in 1523, Luther made a classical separation of power: Christians are under the authority of two kingdoms (the "two swords" doctrine). The first is the Kingdom of God ruled by Christ, the second is the secular authority that organizing worldly affairs and providing justice<sup>8</sup>. Secular authority is unnecessary for "true Christians" because they trust in God's

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<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, for example, supported Hegel's interpretation of the Reform, arguing that Luther's theology was a major step towards self-consciousness in mankind's progression. With its destruction of traditional ties, communitarianism, and dogmatic thinking, Lutheran Reformation paved the way for individual freedom (Ozment, 1980: 260-261).

<sup>8</sup> Luther used the distinction of authorities as spiritual and temporal from the Middle Ages, but with some crucial differences. Against medieval and coetaneous Catholic approach that accepted the superiority of the papacy over secular authorities and further gave legitimacy to use the sword. Against these approaches, Luther defended that the spiritual power has no authority

order and do not need temporal laws. However, because they are minorities, the existence of an authority in the world that will ensure the secular laws and justice following God's will is necessary (Luther, 2016: 73-75). On the other hand, the duties of these two kingdoms are different and they cannot interfere with each other. Otherwise, it creates chaos (Luther, 2016: 79). For a Christian, it is a great service to God to be a ruler following God's will (Luther, 2016: 88). The duty of the faithful people (as St. Paul said) is to obey these rulers, even if they torment them. Because every government is from God. If there is an evil government over society, he is God's envoy to punish the wicked society. Therefore, the people have to maintain faith in God and patiently obey the authority (Luther, 2016: 104). As an exception to the issue of obedience, Luther argued that to resistance to secular authority, the ruler must be foreign, or that the position of the resister must be equal to authority<sup>9</sup>. Otherwise, the lower authority should accept violence as a punishment of God without any resistance (Luther, 2016: 116). However, it is frequently emphasized that resisting a ruler who believes in God is not right.

As seen above, for Luther, secular power's source is God, therefore it cannot be resistible. Beginning from God, power is given to lower authorities step by step –*flowed downwards*, and lower authorities have to obey their superiorities because of God's will. So, the right to resistance is permissible against an inferior or equal authority but forbidden the superior one. According to that, in the German political system, a prince should not resist or engage in war with his superior, the emperor (Shoenberger, 1979: 3). Common people, on the other hand, had two duties to God and the prince in this case: trust God's grace (which includes love of neighbor and religious practices) and obey secular authority no matter its goodness or evilness.

When evaluating Luther's *Temporal Authority* and his other approaches on the right to resistance, socio-political conditions of the era should be examined to reveal the main intention of the reformer. In 1517, Luther dramatically protested the church and left Catholicism to support evangelical ideas. In his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, written in 1520, Luther made a call to all German princes and young emperor Charles V to reform the church. In addition to Christians, rulers should be aware of the political, social, and economic problems that were leading to displeasure in the populace and mostly rooted in the corruption of the church. Luther was seeking support for his ecclesiastical reformation ideas from secular authorities, without knowing that he would be one of the causes of the rebellion, and he found princes who defended their independence from the emperor (Kuenning, 1987: 310). German princes, particularly Elector Frederick of Saxony, protected Luther from Emperor Charles V and Pope Leo X after the 1521 Diet of Worms which would probably cause the death of Luther. So, even with his revolutionary ideas on theology; the *ecclesia* as *congregatio fidelium*, *presbyteros* as elders, relation with God of an individual without any mediators, Luther could not oppose or humiliate the secular authorities. Because Luther's life and his reformation movement depended on

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outside of its realm, not over secular authorities. The temporal order and justice is the duty of temporal powers (Johnson, 2003: 13-14).

<sup>9</sup> Luther described the levels of secular authority as feudal hierarchical system, begins with the emperor and is lowered to lords.

the protection of the Protestant princes. On the other hand, against the secular power of the church, he had to support the secular authorities to protect his reformed church. Moreover, only a strong state could inhibit the evil nature of humanity and provide security for its subjects. For these reasons, he expressed that the resistance is fruitless, risky, and demonstrates the lack of faith in God (Shoenberger, 1979: 5-6). Luther praised the secular authority for the order in the world. Without the secular sword, there would be “chaos, anarchy and disintegration”, because the Gospel cannot rule the unbelievers if there is not a strong secular authority (Arnal, 1980: 450). Therefore, Luther’s defense of established secular authorities against lower ones and especially masses, which recommended pacifism, is quite reasonable. This pragmatic position of Luther makes political history important to understand the change of his ideas.

The pragmatic consideration of Luther and his fear of general disorder can be seen clearly in Peasants’ War. Firstly, peasants in Germany were living in terrible conditions because of several taxes of the empire, church, and feudal authorities. Although there were courts that had duties to protect serfs’ rights, the court members were lords, clergy, and jurists. Therefore, peasants had many vital problems to support the rebellion. Luther, on the other side, contributed the general idea of the revolt unwillingly by his early writings especially on the illegality of the clergy and corruption of the church (Arnal, 1980: 446-448). Indeed many publications in that period accused Luther to incite the revolts with his writings, particularly on anticlericalism, from Catholic thinkers<sup>10</sup> (Edwards, 1990: 465). With their spiritual leader Thomas Müntzer, the peasants who rejected both the papal and secular oppressions, the church and feudal laws (they pressed for the abolishment of serfdom), threatened the Protestant princes’ authorities. Against that, Luther published works to calm the populace and suggested mid-way between princes and peasants in his *Friendly Admonition to Peace* (April 1525) and called peasants to obey God’s order, and then, he sided conservatism about the feudal system and nobility to define these demands as “a piece of robbery; by which every man takes from his lord the body, that very body which is his lord’s property” and added, “A worldly kingdom cannot exist unless there is in it an inequality of persons, so that some are free, some imprisoned, some lords, some subjects” (Arnal, 1980: 457-459; Pelz, 2016: 22). This idea had been already mentioned by him in 1520, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, that freedom and equality of a Christian before God, not in the secular world. He claimed spiritual equivalent and freedom, not intended to question social hierarchy (Cohn, 1979: 8). However, after May 1525, the revolt was quelled with violence by princes’ forces, and Luther published *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, in which he left his former attitude that offered peace, he invited all Christians to “smite, slay and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful or devilish than a rebel” because “one must kill a mad dog, if you do not strike it, it will strike you and a whole land with you” (Arnal, 1980: 463-464).

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<sup>10</sup> For detailed information about the criticisms of the Catholics about the relation between Luther’s writings and Peasants’ War, see M. U. Edwards (1990). “Lutherschmähung?” Catholics on Luther’s Responsibility for the Peasants’ War. *The Catholic Historical Review*, 76(3), 461-480. For the Luther’s effects of anticlericalism in Peasants’ War, see also H. J. Cohn (1979). Anticlericalism in the German Peasants’ War 1525. *Past & Present*, (83), 3-31.

Luther, with this declaration, strengthened and radicalized his view on obedience to secular authorities by calling the Christian individuals to assault rebels. Revolt against established and legitimized power that was accepted by feudal laws deserved bloody force because they also rebel against God's will and threaten the secular order. In this interpretation of Luther, it can be said that the risk against the feudal order, the Protestant princes, had an impact. After peasants' demands to abolish the serfdom/elites and to establish the equality in society directly aimed to privileges and authority of princes. Indeed, Luther did not accuse princes of their slaughter, but support and call other people to participate, and did not reject that after the war in his *Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants* in August 1525<sup>11</sup> (Arnal, 1980: 465). So, these connection demonstrates the link between Luther's thoughts on secular authority and the political and social conditions of the period. *Temporal Authority* (in this, Luther claimed that the populace should not involve any resistance) and his reactions to the Peasants' War were a systematic defense of his approach to the secular sword which gained a kind of holiness from God that forbids resistance, and also beneficial to Luther for protecting to what he built and even to his life. Moreover, in 1526, in *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved?* Luther emphasized the populace acts if it is necessary for their duties: "*Christians ... do not fight as individuals or for their own benefit, but as obedient servants of the authorities under whom they live*" (Johnson, 2003: 16). His justifications for secular authorities in theological bases were a service response to the generosity of the Protestant princes. Therefore, before the 1530s, Luther's strict rejection of the resistance to secular authorities –which have the same mean to resist God's order for him– was one of the crucial points of his Christian identity.

### 3. THE APOCALYPSE AND THE RIGHT TO RESISTANCE AFTER 1531

Another important point of Luther's theological view is his pessimism. Based on the Bible, he believed that the true citizenship of a Christian is the Kingdom of Heaven, under the rule of Christ. Furthermore, he obsessed with the apocalyptic end in the latter part of his life. After the 1540s, he totally accepted that the world is worst as it can be, and it would not stand fifty years more. There would be nothing good for a Christian in this wicked world, he estimated, the second coming of Christ and the judgment is close because of immorality and lack of faith in Germany (Kuenning, 1987: 307-309).

About the pessimism of Luther, the political developments of the era were effective to his world view. The question of Elector Frederick of Saxony about the theological right to resist the emperor if the emperor is evil, in 1523, had not been answered by Luther. But in 1529, Bugenhagen prepared a justification for resistance with two theological arguments of Luther from *Temporal Authority*: first, the different areas of spiritual and temporal authorities without interference with each other, and second one

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<sup>11</sup> "*These peasants would not listen, they would not let anyone tell them anything, so their ears must now be unbuttoned with musket balls till their heads jump off their shoulders. ... He who will not hear God's Word when it is spoken with kindness, must listen to the headsman, when he comes with his axe*" and in 1533, he said to his friends: "*I, Martin Luther, slew all the peasants in the uprising, for I ordered them to be put the death. But I refer it all to our Lord God ... who commanded me to speak as I did*" (Arnal relayed from Luther, 1980: 464-465). This words of Luther from 1533 should be compared with his thoughts at the end of 1530s on right to resistance for the emperor.



referred to the main duty of the secular authority, protection of his subjects. These arguments were quite rational if Luther's work considered without the parts on the right to resistance. Because, still, the emperor was the head of the secular power pyramid. However, Bugenhagen provided a legitimate base for resistance, and Philip of Hesse used this to create a league between Protestant princes and city governments. With some provocative events at the end of the decade, princes were encouraged to stand against the papal and imperial forces. However, for most of them, Luther's permission was very important to the legitimacy of their alliance. Luther, on the other hand, refused to join them. In February 1531, he defended the Emperor's laws against the natural right theories in a letter to Lazarus Spengler (Shoenberger, 1979: 7-11). Before 1530, some evangelical theologians and lawyers developed solutions to the resistance problem, and debates were based on the natural right of resistance and constitutional approaches to restrict the authority of the emperor. Luther rejected these arguments until 1531 (Kolb, 2004: 49).

Luther, in 1531, responded to the anticipations and wrote *Warning to His Dear German People*, but not as expected from Philip of Hesse. With some arguments of unjust executions of the emperor such as lack of rights and fair hearing, Luther called all German Christians to not obey the emperor, because his judgments were against both divine law/God's order and his own imperial laws and duties. Besides, he accepted the jurists as the authority on secular law and accepted the emperor as a limited authority. Therefore, citizens should reject to join his side in the war (Shoenberger, 1979: 11-12). This was not a total approval to resist the emperor but demonstrated Luther's opposition to the emperor's intentions. Until the *Warning*, Luther always defended obedience and accepted the emperor as chief of secular laws. So, this text is important to determine his change of thought.

During the decade, Luther constantly defended the limited power of the emperor and defined the system as a "legal relationship", not a monarchy like other European kingdoms. According to him, got inspire by jurists, the emperor has duties and obligations because of his special position. After 1539, Luther clarified his thought of the empire, in addition to the emperor's legal obligations, he has to share his authority with other German princes<sup>12</sup> –an aristocracy, instead of a monarchy. In a letter that was written in February, he told: "*the emperor is not a monarch and cannot depose the electoral princes nor alter the form of the empire*" (Shoenberger, 1979: 13). He reidentified the functions of the emperor as same as French scholar Jean Gerson. For Gerson, the supreme power in a religious or secular authority is the representative assemblies with the power of legislation. Hence the leader (pope/king) is a minister or a rector who must meet his obligations. So the ruler cannot be above the law, he is charged with enforcing it, otherwise, the political society will be destroyed (Skinner, 1978: 116-117). Same as Gerson, Luther claimed that the position of the emperor is alike a "university rector" who shares the same power

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<sup>12</sup> According to Luther, German constitution ensures a polity that enforce the emperor to power-sharing with the electors who had the legitimacy to protect themselves and their subjects from a tyrant emperor and foreign invaders (Cameron, 2006: 161). This approach, like many other Protestant thinker, constituted a theoretical framework to resistance, and it should be evaluated with the Calvin's late 1550s and Huguenots' theories on the constitutional resistance to legitimate –and mostly hostile against the Protestants– secular authorities.

with the electors but a superior position. Therefore, if he acted against the law, the princes can resist him legally (Shoenberger, 1979: 14). Through this approach, Luther legitimized the right to resistance to the emperor (who was considered as a tyrant, robber, and murderer by Luther in his 1539 writings), even his early writings that praised the emperor as the owner of the law and completely opposed to resistance. By 1539, it can be said that Luther almost left his former ideas in his work *Temporal Authority*. Thereafter, his understanding of the right to resistance got closer to constitutionalism and even natural law theories. In 1538, a proclamation signed by many theologians included Luther and Melanchthon, was a defense of the right to resistance based on natural law, the protection of oneself and his family (Shoenberger, 1979: 16). These ideas were far away from Luther's theology before the 1530s. But in the process of time and change of the circumstance, also influences of Melanchthon's writings at the beginning of the 1530s, Luther embraced the natural law arguments to support his resistance ideas.

What happened after the 1530s to cause a change in Luther's approaches about the resistance to the empire and made him a pessimist to the secular world? In the beginning, Charles V condemned the reformers several times and called them to obey Rome again (Kolb, 2004: 46), and at the end of the decade, he decided to attack Protestant princes to destroy the power of heretics and to resolve the religious schism. In response to this, Philip of Hesse intended to resist the emperor, and for that, declared the justifiability of resisting the emperor (Shoenberger, 1979: 18). Until that time, the conditions were favorable for the evolvment of the reformation: Charles's large size of lands made communications difficult and the lands open for attacks from the east. Moreover, the Ottomans were capturing the empire lands between 1521 and 1530 and threatened the whole of central Europe (Ozment, 1980: 248-253). That is means after the Diet of Worms, Charles was occupied with fighting against Muslim invaders in Eastern Europe and had no time to deal with Luther's movement. Luther utilized these circumstances and told his followers in March 1522 to think, because unless understanding the truth, the attitudes of a Christian would acquire nothing as the peasants who created chaos; then, teach the populace and disseminate the evangelical doctrine (Cameron, 2006: 155). As seen, Luther's only problem before the 1530s was a misunderstanding of his teaching by the mass, so he defended the obedience to secular authority and opposed violence and resistance to prevent the harms of ignorance and sinful individuals. But, after a long period of peace between the "papists" and "heretics", except for some quarrels, a more destructive and real war was near, and Luther was aware that the Catholic forces could destroy the Protestants and also reformed church. He was patient to act against the empire until the emperor cleared his decisions against Protestantism. So, it can be said that Luther's apocalyptic view and change of his position were related to the approaching battle, fear of the revolt of the radical reformers against the secular authorities in 1525, and the attacks of the papist emperor (Seidler, 1993: 554). His expressions on the right to resistance, therefore, targeted the emperor's righteousness and legitimacy even though sacredness of his position. Moreover, the emperor's alliance with the papacy was strengthened Luther's evangelical criticisms against the enemies. Throughout his last days, the emperor and the pope were the devils who represented the end of the sinful world for Luther. Hereby, the thoughts on the right to the

resistance of Protestants and Luther were temporal, reactions to developments of the period, and to prevent accuses and attacks of the pope and the emperor to reformers.

## CONCLUSION

Briefly, during the 1520s, the emperor was dealing with the Ottomans and the evangelic princes were protecting Luther from the ecclesiastic courts. The established political system that consisted of hierarchical powers was appropriate for the dissemination of the Protestant doctrines. Luther used this area to strengthen his reformed church and to write evangelical proclamations. Peasants' revolt, on the other hand, was a threat to the order and the authority of princes even though it shared some points with Luther's anticlericalism. Therefore, with *Temporal Authority* and other adhortations, he defended the sacredness of the secular authorities through his new Christian identity and God's will. The right to resistance, for Luther, was completely forbidden and the populace who dared to rebel against the legitimate authorities and God's order deserved punishment because of the chaos they created. He rejected the constitutional resistance approaches that limit secular authority and natural law studies. The intention behind this radical position of Luther was to protect his movements from the populace who were acting without common sense. In the next decade, Emperor Charles V solved his exterior problems and decided to end the religious schism, the heretic movement of princes that stand against his authority. After several warnings from the Catholic side, Protestant jurists and theologians developed constitutional resistance theories to defend themselves forcibly against the papist emperor in the 1530s. Luther had tried to restrain the emperor with his *Warning* and did not include these groups, however, after several years of quarrels, the danger of the attack of the emperor became more real. Luther left his ideas on feudal order, secular hierarchy, and sacredness of the authorities, and defended the right to resistance against the emperor by secular and natural laws.

The sources of the modern natural and constitutional resistance theorists were generally associated with the Protestant thinkers who defended themselves from the brutality of the Catholic kings –Huguenots were the best examples. On the other hand, pioneers of the reformation (Calvin and Luther) are considered with their early writings that emphasized obedience to legitimate secular authority, in Luther's *On Temporal Authority* and Calvin's *On Civil Governments*. However, the reformers changed their ideas due to the political developments of their period like others. For Luther, the political system of Germany, social movements, and the emperor's agenda were the factors to the changes in his approaches to the right to resistance. In this respect, after 1530, Luther and his followers such as Melanchthon and Osiander made a complete *volte face*, defended resistance arguments, and claimed that the resistance to tyranny along with law and force is allowable. This radical attitude of Luther never became dominant in European politics, but it had an impact on Protestant theorists: Luther's late works formed a basis for revolutionist Calvinists in the second part of the sixteenth century (Skinner, 1978: 74). This contribution of Luther provided a line for natural law studies of Protestants (and later of the line, secular-natural law thinkers, Grotius, Pufendorf, and Locke) to the foundation of constitutional

governments, and thereby the legal forms of “modern states” after religious wars in the seventeenth century. In the case of constitutional governments, along with the social contract theorists, the limited political power and individual rights such as fair hearing and freedom of religion ideas that became common in the eighteenth century were defined by natural law understandings, and Protestant thinkers who improved Luther's ideas had a great service to the process.

Consequently, Luther's opposition to any kind of resistance in his early works changed with temporal developments to allow the right with constitutional and positive law, and later natural resistance. He was cautious about resistance and individual acts that may cause the disorder. But through the 1530s and 1540s, to protect his church, Luther reconstituted his theories on resistance; first against the peasants, he called every Christian to fight against rebels, then he warned Christians to disobey the emperor in 1531 with *Warning*. It was not direct theological permission, but close enough to encourage Protestant princes for creating an alliance against the emperor. Later, he clarified (and radicalized) his discourses on the right to resistance to include all Christians against the emperor with constitutional and natural law studies, which was a reaction of radical politics. This chronological research shows the temporality of the resistance thought of Luther, a man who reacted to social and political events of his period.

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