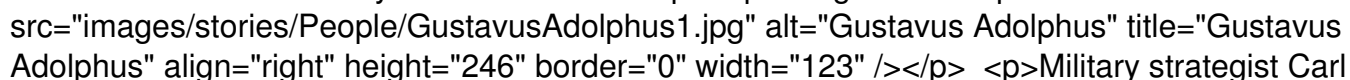


[This article is also available in PowerPoint format here.</p>](http://www.slideshare.net/frontfel/gustavus-adolphus-the-lion-from-the-north)

Gustavus Adolphus is one of the most inspiring characters of the Reformation. The rapid rise to fame of Gustavus Adolphus, the young King of Sweden, his military innovations and dramatic victories in battle turned the tide in The Thirty Years War and saved Protestant Germany from annihilation.</p>

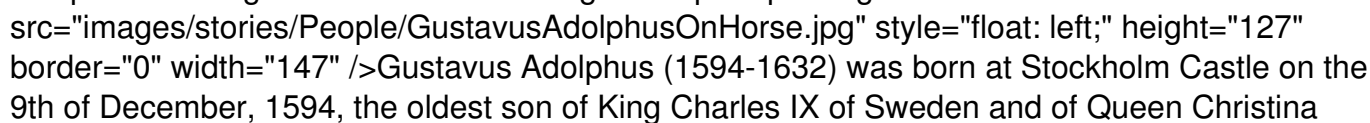
Military strategist Carl von Clausewitz and French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte considered Gustavus Adolphus one

of the greatest generals of all time. Gustavus II is famous for employing mobile artillery on the battlefield, and very aggressive tactics where attack was stressed over defense and mobility emphasized over the usual linear tactics. His musketeers were widely known for their shooting accuracy and reload speed, three times faster than any contemporary rivals. He was an active participant in his battles, and chose to lead charges himself at crucial moments.</p>

He was repeatedly wounded in battle including gunshot wounds to the neck, throat and abdomen. Because of an early wound where a musketball was lodged in his neck near the spine, due to the extreme pain, he chose to avoid wearing the customary two part metal armor cuirass, adopting a flexible leather armor instead.</p>

Gustavus II is attributed with a number of technical innovations, including the paper bullet cartridges, light mobile artillery, lightening the muskets and abolishing the musket rest. He also innovated administrative reforms, conscripting large standing armies, developing the infantry brigade, improving military logistics and standardizing artillery calibers. Gustavus's tactical innovations included perfecting dashing cavalry charges, offensive infantry formations, volley fire and close artillery support to clear the way in front rapid infantry or cavalry advances. Numerous military historians have gone so far as to call him the Father of Modern Armies.</p>

To Protestants, Gustavus Adolphus is one of the greatest examples of a Christian king. He was known in his lifetime as the Lion from the North, the Protector of Protestantism and the Deliverer of Germany. His timely intervention stopped the onward march and devastation caused by the Catholic League and the Austrian Empire. There is no doubt that Gustavus Adolphus helped change the course of European history. He is comparable to other great Christian military commanders: Oliver Cromwell, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson, but as a Reformer-King he can also be compared to King Alfred the Great of England.</p>

Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632) was born at Stockholm Castle on the 9th of December, 1594, the oldest son of King Charles IX of Sweden and of Queen Christina (daughter of the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein.)</p>

Gustavus was born during a turbulent time. His grandfather, Gustavus Vasa (1496-1560) had escaped from a Danish prison in Jutland, and succeeded in delivering his country from the yoke of tyranny. He drove the Danes from Sweden, restored their freedom and was chosen by the grateful country to be their king. Gustavus Vasa had been discipled by one of Luther's students. He was determined to make Sweden a Protestant nation and he instituted reforms in all his states. He required all his subjects to accept this profession of faith: To serve God by being obedient to His Law, and by loving Him above all else; to believe in Jesus Christ as our only Saviour; to study and teach the Word of God with zeal; to love our neighbor as ourself, and to observe the Ten Commandments- such is the true worship that we should render unto God.</p>

However, despite Gustavus Vasa's sincere faith, the Reformation lacked widespread

popular support in Sweden until after his death, when, under his son, Charles IX, the Swedish Church adopted the Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530 as its statement of faith.

Gustavus Adolphus was schooled in the classics and, by age 16, he was not only fluent in his native Swedish and German, but he had also mastered Latin, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Russian and Polish. His austere parents ensured that he was carefully nurtured to champion the cause of the Protestant Faith. He was trained as a prince and as a soldier. Already from 9 years old he was introduced to public life and accompanied his father on official business of state, receiving petitions, conversing with foreign ministers and even joining his father on military campaigns.

Gustavus Adolphus was only 16 years old when his father died and he succeeded to the throne. He inherited a country facing critical external threats and internal disintegration. In the West, there was the war with Denmark, in the East, a war with Russia. The country was bankrupt and riots threatened the internal stability of the kingdom. His father's last letter to him is still extant. It counsels Gustavus: *Fear God. Honor thy father and thy mother. Love deeply and sincerely your brothers and sisters. Esteem the faithful servants of your father, and reward each one according to his merits. Be humane toward your subjects. Punish the wicked, love the good. Trust everyone, but not without caution. Observe the law without respect of person. Deprive no one of privileges if they are well founded and not contrary to the general good.*

Gustavus terminated the fratricidal struggle against Denmark with the Peace of Kanared, 1613. He then turned his full attention toward the war in Russia against the sworn enemy of Sweden- Sigismund, the King of Poland. Gustavus insisted on a strict code of conduct and regular worship services in his military camps. Morning and evening his entire army knelt before almighty God and reverently implored His aid and favor.

Gustavus was seen digging in the trenches, helping to build the fortifications, and frequently in the front line of battle. He was severely wounded on a number of occasions, but by 27 February 1617 he concluded this war with the Peace of Stolboba-- which was very advantageous for Sweden. Finland, Latvia and Estonia were now under Swedish control, and Russia was excluded from the Baltic Sea. King Gustavus' first concern was to ensure that the authorities of all conquered cities returned to the Protestants their places of worship and freedom of religion.

Both contemporaries and historians have commented on the extraordinary generosity and magnanimity of Gustav. He treated his conquered enemies with a mildness that astonished both friends and foes. However, he would not tolerate any profanity, nor any disrespectful jesting concerning the Bible or true religion. He often commented that we should work and live as under the eye of God. *God has given me the crown, not that I should fear or remain in repose, but that I may consecrate my life to His glory and to the good of my subjects.* He was often found studying the Word of God and quotations from the Scripture saturated his conversation and instructions. Gustavus was described as a huge man, blond and broad shouldered, with a handsome beard and a piercing eye. Other written descriptions include *of lofty stature, tidy, well proportioned and noble in all his manners and actions. He loved music, and played some instruments very well.*

In 1620 Gustavus visited Germany to marry Maria Eleanora of Brandenburg. His marriage was celebrated 28 November 1620 at his palace in Stockholm. However, their happy marriage was grief-stricken by the first two children being stillborn. Gustavus wrote: *Sorrow has come to my house. God has punished me in giving me a dead child.* He accepted this loss as *a chastisement* from the Lord and humbled himself under the Almighty. When Maria and Gustavus were blessed with a healthy daughter, Christina, Adolphus rejoiced greatly.

During this time, what would later be known as The Thirty Years War was

threatening to engulf the whole continent of Europe. Germany was the battleground between the mainly Protestant North and Catholic South. Spearheaded by the Jesuits, the Catholic Counter Reformation was beginning to mobilise a militant counter-attack against the Protestant princes of Germany. They sought to reverse the Peace of Augsburg (1555), which had been forced on Emperor Charles V when he abdicated. The counter-Reformation Catholics were led by Archduke Ferdinand- a Hapsburg (who became Holy Roman Emperor in 1619)- and his rival Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. The Lutherans were led by elector John George of Saxony. The Calvinists were led by Prince Frederick of the Palatinate. The Protestants formed a defensive union, and the Catholics forged a Catholic League in opposition.

With Spain seeking to reconquer Holland, the Dutch sought to support fellow Protestants in Bohemia who were resisting the imposition of Catholicism by Ferdinand. The Bohemians elected Prince Frederick of the Palatinate as their king. The Catholic Emperor Ferdinand declared, *It were preferable to rule over a desert than over a country of heretics.* With this he unleashed a wave of religious persecution and political oppression, which raised the indignation and opposition of the Protestant majority of Bohemia. They called to their Protestant brethren in Hungary, Moravia, Silesia and the Evangelical Union in Germany to aid them in their fight against their common enemies, the Emperor and the Pope.

The first two battles of this war were won by the Bohemians. The Evangelical Union sent 4,000 men under Count Mansfeld who seized Polsem, one of the strongest Catholic cities in Bohemia. Count Thurm led the Bohemian armies from victory to victory to the very gates of Vienna. With the Austrian army defeated, Ferdinand was at the mercy of the Protestants when a Flemish army from Belgium appeared in the city and saved the Catholic Emperor from total defeat. At this point the new king of Bohemia, Frederick V, from the Palatine, gave offense to the Hussites and Lutherans and soon found himself abandoned by all the Protestant princes. At their greatest hour of need, Bohemia found itself alone against the united troops of Austria and the Catholic League. Overwhelmed and discouraged, the Bohemians were defeated and Prague was taken 9 November 1621. Ferdinand had 27 of the most prominent leaders of Bohemia beheaded, much property was confiscated and many were exiled or executed. All Protestant churches were closed and Bohemia groaned under the oppression of Emperor Ferdinand II as he tore up and burned the pieces of their Bill of Rights guaranteeing religious freedom.

General Tilly swept over Germany, pillaging and devastating towns, churches and villages. The Protestants knew that these were only the prelude to their extermination. Spain and Austria's early military successes, and their plans to occupy naval bases on the North Sea and the Baltic coasts, led the Dutch to encourage King Christian of Denmark to open a second front against the Habsburgs. This ill-fated campaign (1625-1629) ended with imperial generals Tilly and Wallenstein chasing the Danes back to their own land. These staggering imperial successes, and the Edict of Restitution of 1629 handing all Protestant churches and schools over to Catholic control, provoked a violent backlash. German Protestants appealed to King Gustavus Adolphus for protection.

After winning wars against Denmark, Russia and Poland, Sweden, despite having scarcely more than one million inhabitants, had emerged as a great power. King Gustav's military achievements were already legendary and he was perceived as the last hope of the devastated Protestant cause.

Wallenstein's imperial army, 50,000 strong, had defeated and dispersed the troops of Mansfeld, and occupied Silesia, lower Saxony and Holstein. Denmark had sued for peace at Lubeck 22 May 1629. Enormous, ruinous taxes had been imposed on the occupied Protestant areas. Soldiers were ordered *in the name of the Emperor: be active and if any resist you, kill them and throw them into a fire hot enough*

to melt the stars. Even the Emperor's brother objected in a letter: "Your Majesty can have no idea of the conduct of the troops. For mere amusement, windows are broken, walls thrown down, noses and ears cut off, when persons are tortured, violated, assassinated, these are certainly irregularities which superiors should and can prevent who fill their purses with the blood and sweat of the poor people. Discontent is everywhere increasing at an alarming rate, my conscience permits me no longer to conceal from you the true state of affairs."

Cardinal Richelieu, the French chancellor, an enemy of the Huguenots, was also concerned at this resurgent power of Spain and Austria. He wrote in his memoirs: "All the princes of Germany injured and ravaged, looked toward the King of Sweden in their misery, as navigators toward the port of safety."

Many persecuted Protestants fled to Sweden for safety. Gustavus called his senate together at Upsala and described the increasing injuries suffered by their brethren in Germany and the imminent danger which threatened Sweden if she awaited Catholic control of the Baltic ports. Gustavus determined to rescue the German Protestants from this war of annihilation being waged by the Austrian Emperor. He was aware that he was about to enter a struggle against a sovereign feared by all of Europe and who was thought to be invincible. He put his affairs in order, streamlined its government and established the council as a permanent cabinet to make decisions in his absence. With his 4-year-old Christiana in his arms, he addressed the leaders in the Hall of Assembly: "I've not thoughtlessly engaged in this perilous war which calls me far from you. Heaven is my witness that it is neither for my satisfaction, nor personal interests that I go into this conflict. Ready to sink under the weight of oppression which hangs over them, the German Protestants stretch suppliant hands to us. If it please God, we will give them aid and protection. I'm not ignorant of the dangers that await me; I have already been in many others, and by the grace of God I have ever come happily out of them. But I feel that I may lose my life there, and this is why, before leaving you, I recommend you all to the protection of the omnipotent One." He exhorted to pastors to ever preach the pure Gospel to their flocks and to be examples of true Christian conduct. He wished his citizens prosperity in business and abundant harvests. "Finally, I send up to God most ardent prayers for all my subjects farewell from the depths of my heart, and-- perhaps forever."

Gustavus assembled 15,000 soldiers and, with 30 vessels of war and 200 transport ships, set sail for Europe. As they landed he knelt and prayed: "Oh Thou that rulest over the heavens and the earth, over winds and over the seas, how can I worthily thank Thee for the marvelous protection which Thou hast shown during this perilous voyage? My heart is full of gratitude for Thy favors. Oh, deign to favor my undertaking here, so that it may turn out, not to my, but to Thy glory. Grant, through me, to deliver Thy oppressed Church, and to be to Thy faithful servants a source of great consolation." He noted that their debarkation took place 24 June 1630- exactly one century after the Protestants had made their celebrated Confession of Faith at Augsburg.

He exhorted his soldiers: "Pray without ceasing. The more prayers, the more victories. Think not that I undertake this war for myself or for my kingdom. We go to succor our oppressed brethren. By brilliant victories you can accomplish this generous project. Fear not the enemy that we are going to meet in battle; they are the same that you have already conquered in Russia. Your bravery has just compelled Poland to conclude a truce of 6 years. If you still show the same courage and perseverance, you will secure, to the Evangelical Church and to our brethren in Germany, the peace and security for which they are now suffering." The King followed up this speech with a proclamation of the military rules and regulations. The soldiers were warned that any murder or

looting or attempt against life or property would be punishable by death. Their conduct was to be blameless as they were Christian soldiers fighting in a sacred cause.

First Gustavus secured his communication lines with Sweden by chasing the imperial troops off the islands in the Baltic Sea and capturing Stettin. His army disembarked at Peenemunde 16 July 1630.

As multiple plots to assassinate Gustavus were uncovered, his officers urged him to take precautions. Gustavus retorted: *"I trust in God, I fear nothing; what shall man do unto me?"* While conquering Pomerania, Gustavus was scouting with 70 of his cavalry when they were suddenly surprised and surrounded by 500 of the enemy. The King's horse was shot out from under him. Many of his men fell all around him during the furious fighting. The Swedes were about to be completely overwhelmed when 200 Fins, alerted to the danger by the firing, arrived, dispersed the enemy and saved the King. Several times during his military career Gustavus was saved from what seemed like certain death by some miracle. On one occasion, men all around fell under a shower of cannon balls and musket shots so that his clothes were splattered with their blood. He himself was shot in the neck, on the shoulder and in the stomach. He suffered a saber wound on the hand and numerous other injuries.

As Gustavus secured northern Germany, the Catholic League mustered two massive armies, under General Pappenheim and General Tilly, to destroy the Swedes. Gustavus led his men from victory to victory, deeper into central Germany, securing Brandenburg and seizing Frankfurt on the Oder after a short siege. Meanwhile, Tilly was besieged Magdeburg, one of the most important and richest Protestant centers in Germany. But, while Gustavus sought to hasten to the aid of besieged Magdeburg, the suspicious electors of Brandenburg and Saxony refused him passage through their states. Frustrated by the obstructive timidity of these electors, Gustavus hesitated to employ force against two Protestant princes. Tragically, after a heroic resistance, Magdeburg fell to Tilly's imperial troops. Betrayed by traitors and undermined by the procrastination of its neighbors, the richest city in Germany at that time was overcome by fury and savagery as drunken soldiers of 9 nations purged the Protestants. The victims were so numerous- estimated at 25,000- that they were thrown in wagonloads into the river Elbe. In one church 53 young girls were beheaded. Croatians laughed as they cast little children into the midst of flames. The tortures and horrors perpetrated in Magdeburg were so shocking that several imperial officers sought Tilly to put an end to them. He replied: *"I've promised three days for pillaging and slaying. The soldiers must have some amusement after so many fatigues!"* Within 12 hours Magdeburg was a roaring furnace which reduced that vast and opulent city to smoldering ruins and ashes. The fate of Magdeburg was reported throughout Europe, as a great triumph in the Catholic areas, and as a frightful tragedy to all Protestants.

Gustav Adolphus declared his grief and frustration over the obstructionism which had prevented him from rushing to the aid of these beleaguered brethren. At last the Protestant princes entered into an alliance with the King of Sweden. But, when the elector of Brandenburg persisted in a neutrality too favorable to Austria to be tolerated, Adolphus moved against Berlin. At the sight of the Swedish army, George William consented to make a treaty with his brother-in-law. By this stage the imperial armies had devastated Thuringia. Gustav moved to rescue Hesse from the advancing Austrians. Tilly turned on Saxony. On 27 July 1631 the Swedes made a devastating night attack on Catholic cavalry at Burgstall.

The elector of Saxony welcomed Gustav to the fortress of Wittenburg which put him in possession of the Elbe. On 17 September at the Battle of Breitenfeld, near Leipzig, the Saxons and Swedes combined to confront Tilly's Catholic League. This battle was to determine the future of Protestantism and Catholicism in Europe. Gustavus addressed his troops and reminded them that the very existence of the

Reformation in Germany depended upon the outcome of this battle. *“We battle not for the honors of this world, but for the Word and the glory of God, for the True Faith which alone can save us, the Faith which the Catholics have cruelly oppressed, and which they would gladly blot out of existence.”*

An artillery barrage lasting two hours opened the battle. A west wind blew the smoke of the cannons and clouds of dust from the newly worked fields toward the Swedish lines. Gustav made such a rapid movement of his troops northwards covered by this smoke that the enemy had no time to prevent it. As Tilly's forces attacked the Swedes, they were received by the most violent fire. General Pappenheim attacked the right wing of the Swedes with his cavalry, but without any effect. Seven times the imperial cavalry charged and seven times the Swedes repulsed them. Gustavus himself commanded the right wing in person to respond to this threat. Tilly threw all his forces against the left wing of the Swedes, but Gustavus reinforced with three regiments just in time to block this move. Then King Gustavus himself decided the victory by putting to flight the enemy's left wing and seizing the heights on which Tilly had placed his artillery. Soon the Catholic forces had to endure the fire of their own cannon. Battered by cannon fire and a general advance of the Swedes, the imperial forces broke and were routed. As general retreat was ordered, the imperial army disbanded and fled in disorder.

Gustavus' victory at Leipzig was complete. He fell on his knees, in the midst of the dead and the wounded, and surrounded by his men, poured forth aloud his gratitude to God in an ardent prayer for this decisive victory. Then he rose to pass from rank to rank thanking his brave soldiers for their sacrifices. In his dispatch to his chancellor Gustavus wrote: *“Although we have to deplore the loss of so many brave men, we should before all and above all, thank God for His divine protection; for we were never in so great a danger.”*

The results of the victory at Leipzig were immense. The united forces of the Catholic League and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire had been annihilated. Barely 2,000 remained of their previously invincible army. Tilly had lost all his artillery and nearly 18,000 men. He could only retreat towards Bavaria. With no imperial army left to stop him, Gustavus liberated the lower Palatinate, took Marienberg and Frankfurt (on Main) and W?rtzburg. On 10 December he entered Mainz. The Saxon army marched into Bohemia and liberated Prague by November 1631. The speed and extent of these Swedish victories greatly alarmed Richelieu, who had supported Sweden as a counter to the rising power of the Habsburgs, but he was shocked at this dramatic reversal of fortunes.

Gustavus' march to the Rhine was triumphal. After decades of suffering under the imperial troops, even Catholics welcomed Gustavus as a liberator. In Thuringia the Duke of Saxe-Wiemar became one of Gustavus' most able generals. Historians have noted that the irreproachable conduct of the Swedish army inspired admiration and confidence. Soldiers who engaged in looting received the death penalty. When Gustavus captured Catholic strongholds such as W?rtzburg, he organized a government composed of an equal number of Catholics and Protestants. While he insisted on Protestants being returned their churches confiscated under the so-called *“Edict of Restitution”*, he ensured that Catholics received the same freedom of worship and security in their property. At one Catholic town where the rulers had persecuted the Protestants most cruelly, his officers urged Gustavus to punish them. The King replied: *“I have come to break the chains of bondage and not forge new ones. Let them live as they have lived.”*

Frankfurt on the Main resisted Gustavus and declared their desire to remain a commercial ally of the Empire. Gustavus responded indignantly: *“I am astonished to learn that Frankfurt prizes more highly its wealth than it does the duties which religion and patriotism impose upon it. It is, indeed, little to its honor to talk of its sales shops and its fairs*

when the liberty of Germany and the future of the Reformation are at stake. It is for the well being of Germany, and for the independence of the Protestant Faith, that I do battle. No obstacle can stop me. For I am conscious of the justice and nobleness of my cause.

Frankfurt soon opened its gates and received Gustavus with great honour.

When a Jesuit priest was captured attempting to assassinate the King, Gustavus responded, "The King cannot live shut up in a box. The wicked have not so much power as ill will, and confidence in God is the best safeguard. God knows perfectly well how long He wishes to employ my frail arm. If I fail He will raise up another instrument more worthy and more powerful than I. His work does not depend on the life of one man."

At the beginning of 1632, Gustavus pursued Tilly into Bavaria, where he defeated the imperial forces at the Battle of Lech, in the face of Tilly's strongly entrenched camp at Rain. He pursued the fleeing enemy to their fortress of Ingolstadt where Tilly died of his wounds a fortnight later. Gustavus then liberated the long-oppressed Protestant cities of Augsburg and Ulm. In May he occupied Munich, the capital of Bavaria. The magistrates and citizens of Nuremberg received Gustavus and his forces with great rejoicing, with the thunder of cannon and the ringing of bells mingled with applause and songs from the enthusiastic crowds. He rejoiced to be in the center of Germany in one of the most powerful cities of the Empire, among his fellow Protestants.

Printed copies of Gustavus' address to the city of Nuremberg remain: "I thank you. I can wish nothing better in return than perseverance in the Evangelical Faith. Let nothing turn you from it; neither threats nor promises, nor any of the passions to which the human nature is subject. Let not the riches of earth make you forgetful of the still more precious treasures of heaven. You have wicked and wily enemies, whose aim is the annihilation of Protestantism. Their hope is to found a peace upon the ruin of all Protestants, and they seek their end by the destruction of millions of souls. God has entrusted to you the administration of an opulent and powerful city. So govern it as not to fear to give an account which you one day have to render at the tribunal of God. In these misfortunes God has aimed to make us feel how much we are sinners. For you, for the defense of the Gospel, I left my peaceful home and came into your agitated country. I've sacrificed the resources of my poor subjects, their blood, my life and love of my family. I will do for you all that the grace of God will give me power to do. On your side, be willing to suffer for a while, if need be, for a sacred cause. Remain faithful to it. Then God will bless you; He will cause your city to flourish. His Name will be everywhere revered, and after the glory and honour of earth, will come that of heaven."

Poems and songs composed at that time described "the good King of Sweden, a glorious protector, this new Gideon, this second Joshua, who directs the battles of the Lord; this other David who has brought Goliath low; this valiant man whose heart is without fraud and who seeks only the glory of God..."

After seeing Tilly, the butcher of Magdeburg, suitably punished, Gustavus rode into Augsburg as the citizens sang Psalm 103 and rejoiced greatly over their liberation. Gustavus entered this city, where the princes were first called Protestants for resisting the Emperor Charles V, and where Melancthon had presented the Augsburg Confession just over 100 years before, with great emotion and rejoicing.

At the Battle of Ingolstadt, a 24-pounder cannon ball had swept the King's horse from under him. The man next to him, the Duke of Barden, had his head shot off a few moments later. The King was covered with blood and dust and all around feared that Gustavus had been killed. He rose and declared: "The apple is not yet ripe. Neither my high birth, nor my royal crown, nor my weapons, nor my many victories, can save me from death. I submit to the will of God. If He takes me from the world, He will not abandon the sacred cause which I defend. I know that I

can count upon the aid of the All-powerful, and that it is He who has sent me into Germany. ♦

Despite cruel treatment meted out on his soldiers when captured by the Catholics, Gustavus resolved to respond to their most bitter hatred by inexhaustible mercy. Many sought to persuade the king to avenge upon Munich the sacking of Magdeburg. He steadfastly refused this call to revenge and forbade, under pain of death, any crime against life or property. Even the Bavarian priests praised the nobility of so generous an adversary. Gustavus visited the priests and engaged in Evangelical discussions with them in fluent Latin. When some of his generals complained that the King would do better to put to flight these Jesuits, than to discuss with them thus. ♦ Gustavus replied: ♦ Why would you persecute these men? Do you not see how much they injure the cause which they defend, and how much they help the cause which they oppose? ♦

At this point the Catholic League was dissolved and Austria lay open on all sides. No army stood between Gustavus and the Emperor Ferdinand in Vienna. However, at this point the old enemy, Wallenstein, defeated the Saxons in Bohemia and marched with 60,000 men on Saxony. Gustavus had only 20,000 men, but he could not allow Nuremberg to suffer the same terrible fate as Magdeburg, so he moved with all haste to prevent Wallenstein reaching it. ♦ Nuremberg is the apple of my eye, and I will defend it with all my power, ♦ declared Gustavus.

But Wallenstein stopped short of Nuremberg and encamped in an impregnable position, threatening the Swedes from the heights occupied by several hundred cannon. There were frequent skirmishes and vicious fighting as the Swedes attempted to take the entrenched positions of the Imperials. Thousands of soldiers were lost on both sides. As famine began to affect their camps, discipline broke down. King Gustavus confronted his men and allies concerning these complaints which afflicted his heart: ♦ I would rather lose life than sully by crime the sacred work which God has entrusted me. I pray you, in the Name of divine mercy, to look within yourselves, question your own consciences. Remember that you must render an account to God for your conduct, and that you must one day appear before the tribunal of that Judge Who sees all things. ♦

As Wallenstein began to lay waste to Saxony, Gustavus marched 20,000 men to Erfurt. He ensured that all people and their possessions en route were respected. His troops prayed morning and evening and no disorderly conduct was reported thereafter. On the march, the King saw a bird of prey pursuing a lark. Incredibly, the lark flew straight down and rested on his shoulder. The King tenderly took the lark in his hands and declared: ♦ Poor little bird, may God protect you. ♦ He thanked God for giving him even this opportunity of saving one of His creatures from harm. He saw in this a symbol of the work that he was called to accomplish, protecting Protestant Germany from the Austrian eagle.

In Erfurt, Gustavus was welcomed by his Queen, but he could only stay one day as the threat from Wallenstein was so severe. As he took his leave, Gustavus declared to his Queen: ♦ Be of good courage, we shall see each other again; if it may not be in this life, it will at least be, sooner or later, in the abode of eternal blessedness. ♦ He kissed her one last time and rode fast to rejoin his troops. At Lützen, on the 16th of November 1632, Gustavus summoned his chaplain and spent one hour with him in prayer before attending the regular religious services held every morning for his soldiers. He remained upon his knees during the whole service. Before his men deployed, he had them sing the battle hymn he himself had composed:

♦ Notwithstanding the tumult and the threatening cries which resound around you fear nothing, little flock. Your enemies rejoice in your destruction, but their joy shall be of short duration. Let not your courage fail you.

♦ Your cause is the cause of God! Accomplish your mission, place yourselves in the hands of God, and you shall fear no danger.

He will find another Gideon to defend the people and the Word of God.

We hope in the Name of Jesus, the violence and snares of the wicked will turn against them. They will thus become an object to be despised. God is with us, we are with Him; victory belongs to us.

A thick fog covered the plain on which the battle was to take place. As the Swedes sang Psalms, Wallenstein's cannon announced their impending assault. Gustavus gave the command: *God is with us.* As he mounted his horse without armor, his officers pleaded with him to wear armor. He replied: *The Eternal One is my armor.* He then rode along the lines to encourage his men. He announced: *The day has arrived on which you are to show what you have already learned in war; hold yourselves ready; conduct yourselves as worthy soldiers; fight valiantly for your God, your country and your King. I beseech you, in the name of a Christian conscience and of your honor, to do your duty today as you have done heretofore. March with courage!... I myself will show the way. I am ready to risk my life and to shed my blood with you. Follow me, have confidence in God and bear away a victory whose fruits you and your posterity will gather forever.*

The soldiers responded with shouts of joy and enthusiasm. At 11 am the fog had dissipated and the sun brilliantly illuminated the field of Lutzen. Gustavus raised his eyes towards heaven, and cried aloud: *Jesus! Jesus! Be Thou my help this day, while we battle for the glory of Thy sacred Name.* He then brandished his sword high above his head and commanded: *Forward now, in the Name of the Lord!* The King placed himself on the right wing of his army and led them across the trenches that had been dug by the Austrians. When his infantry did not advance fast enough, he dismounted and charged with them to inspire them with a better example. Continually in the front line, Gustavus sought to strengthen each weak point and inspired his men to throw back the enemy. At a crucial point in battle, he became separated from his troops while leading a cavalry charge into a dense cloud of gunpowder smoke. Hit by gunfire, he fell and was killed while lying severely wounded on the ground.

As word spread throughout the Swedish army that their King was dead, they hurled themselves like furious lions upon the left wing of the enemy and cut the Imperial forces to pieces. Duke Bernard de Weimar took command of the army and charging the right wing, seized the artillery of the Austrians. Wallenstein was preparing to retreat when Pappenheim arrived with 8 regiments of reinforcements. Pappenheim was immediately wounded and forced to withdraw, dying the next day. All hope of bringing the Imperial forces back into line dissipated. Wallenstein abandoned Saxony to the Protestants who finally retook all the strong places that had been occupied by the Austrians. Wallenstein was later assassinated on orders of the Emperor in 1634.

The victory of Lutzen was more a cause of grief than joy to the Swedes. Nothing could compensate for the loss of their beloved King. However, true to his vision, he had remained faithful to his mission and successfully fought for religious freedom in Germany. He had championed the cause of Protestantism and secured religious freedom for centuries to come. Gustavus Adolphus was a dedicated Christian, a Reformer-King and a great general. He transformed the art of warfare, changed the course of history and liberated Protestant Germany from the threat of annihilation. The whole course of modern history would have been dramatically different had not the Lord worked in such a tremendous way through the courageous crusade of this Lion from the North.